

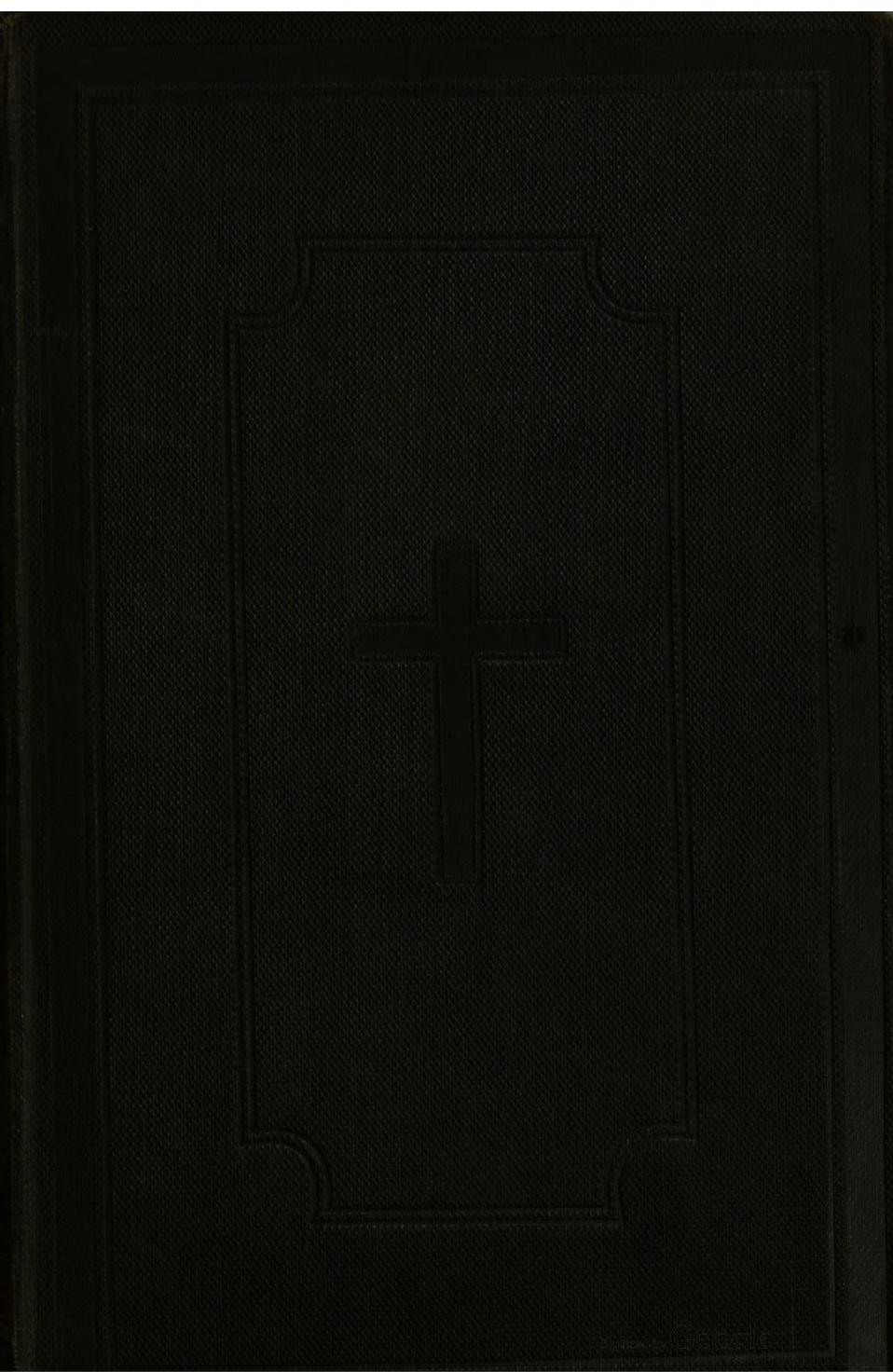
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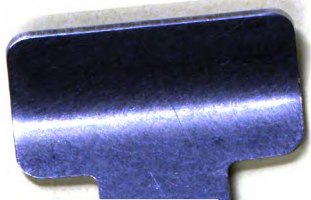
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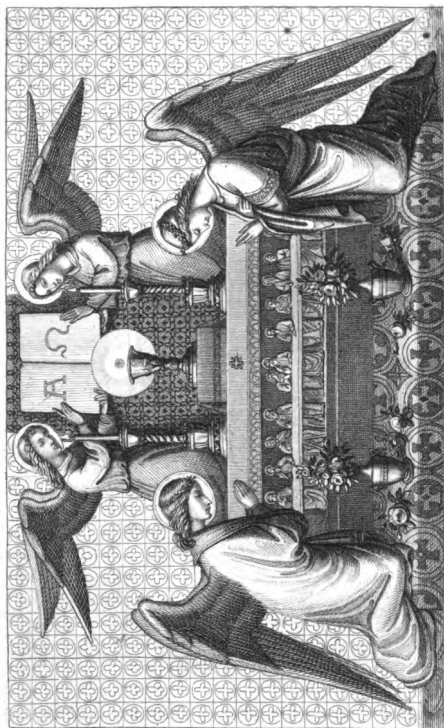






1220. f. 31.





*The British Museum*

THE

OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI;

OR, THE

MYSTICAL LIFE OF OUR LORD

IN THE

**Blessed Sacrament.**

FROM THE FRENCH OF FATHER NOUET, S. J.



**London :**

**THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,**

172, FLEET STREET; 9, CAPEL STREET, DUBLIN; AND DERBY.

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1847.





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THE

## Octave of Corpus Christi.

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DISCOURSE FOR THE FESTIVAL OF THE BLESSED  
SACRAMENT.

*The Holy Sacrament is the bread of all the children of God,  
Jesus Christ invites all to his table.*

“Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.”

“Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”—Matt. xi. 28.

UPON this day Paradise descends upon earth, the Church militant becomes triumphant, and the God of glory exhibits all the attractions of his love, in order to gain our hearts, and bring beatitude even into the midst of our wretchedness. St. Jerome says that it is the office of angels to invite us to the table of Jesus Christ. But it seems to me that this is saying too little, and that it is not the employment of angels alone, but of God himself. All things have their own peculiar sympathies, by which they are mutually attracted and invisibly connected. The loadstone attracts iron, the pole attracts the loadstone; amber attracts straw; the sun draws the vapours from the bosom of the earth, and

from the abyss : but what is it that attracts the souls of the predestinated ? The divine Eucharist. This is their loadstone, their pole, their attraction, this is the sun which enlightens and elevates them. Gain is the attraction of the merchant, honour of the nobleman, booty of the soldier, victory of the general, the prince's favour of the courtier, a crown and imperial command of the prince. But what is the attraction of the faithful ? The love of Jesus Christ, who has hidden in this divine Sacrament all the treasures, all the glory, all the triumphs, and all the crowns of heaven. Truth is the attraction of the mind, happiness of the heart, life of the soul, pleasure of the senses. But the general attraction of all these faculties united is the divine Eucharist. For whoever, says St. Augustine, eats this celestial bread with a pious fervour, discovers the fountain of truth, of justice, of happiness, of pleasure, and of life eternal. To all the faithful, therefore, and to all the predestinated in general, are these words addressed to-day, "Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened."

It is not without reason that the Church calls the divine Eucharist the food of kings, a food which makes them taste immortal pleasures. If we understand by kings those who govern nations and wield the temporal power, it is certain that the happiness of states and the prosperity of christian kingdoms are based on the power of this august sacrament ; that it is from hence that the Son of God, who is the King of kings, governs the universe, and upholds the monarchies which he has established among Christians. The eagles of the Germanic Empire hover around this sacred Body. It is well known that the house of Austria owes its elevation to

the piety of Rodolph towards the holy Sacrament. Hence, also, the lions of Spain derive their force and their gentleness. History tells us, that when Charles the Fifth approached the holy table, he was accustomed to kiss the ground with the deepest reverence, and to lay down his sceptre and crown, as if he desired to bid adieu to all the grandeurs of the world, and seek for repose and happiness in this paradise of delights. But it must be owned that the lilies of France have their roots fastened here still more closely; that our kings, whilst they hold the first rank among the sons of Europe, are also the first at the Eucharistic table, I mean that they surpass all others in piety; and they have in all ages regarded this divine mystery as the object of their particular devotion. They have gloried in holding their crown from the Lamb; and it was the wish of Charlemagne that his son, Louis the Débonnaire, should take it from the altar, because no other hand than that of Jesus Christ was worthy to place it on his head. They have esteemed it an honour to do him homage. Louis the Eleventh, having been suddenly healed after the Communion at Dijon, presented his coronation crown to the sacred Host, professing by this tribute of respect that God alone has power to support the crown of France. They have quitted their own dwellings to make room for him, considering that when the Son of God was willing to live amongst men, he could find no abode more befitting his majesty than the palace of the kings of France. Hugh Capet, after having received the sceptre from the hand of God, gave up his palace to build a chapel for the holy Sacrament, on the spot where the church of St. Bartholomew now stands, thinking that his

house being already royal, could be aggrandized only by becoming divine. His son Robert also dedicated his house to God, by surrendering it for building the church of St. Nicholas. Henry the First gave up his palace for building the church of St. Martin; and Louis the Twelfth the palace of Orleans for building the church of the Penitent Women: he believed that his family was consecrated ever since it had received the sceptre, that the house of France is the house of God, and that the cabinet of our kings is the sanctuary of his adorable Presence. Lastly, they deemed themselves happy in bearing not only the priestly character, as Charlemagne did, but even in discharging the duties of *beadles*, that is to say, of servitors of Jesus Christ, as did St. Louis; and of sacristans, as did Robert, who received as an honour the commission of guarding the holy Sacrament and the sacred vessels of the altar, by this means to gain the continual protection of heaven for his kingdom. So that it may well be said, that our kings are the hosts of the blessed Sacrament, since they have given it lodging in their own houses; they may be called the liegemen of the blessed Sacrament, since they do homage to it for their crown; and the guardians of the Body of Jesus Christ, because they have exhibited such holy ardour in His defence.

But if the holy Sacrament is the food of the kings of the earth, and the root of their temporal prosperity, it may with still greater truth be called the bread of the elect and of the children of God, who are heavenly kings and princes for all eternity. For it is the common opinion of the holy Fathers, that this bread from heaven belongs in a special way to the predestinated; that, if they aspire to a heavenly crown, they

must receive it now at the altar ; that their salvation is attached to the divine Eucharist ; and that, as the Son was made man by the Incarnation, so men are made the children of God by Communion.

## FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH.

It must, says St. Augustine, be taken for granted, as a fundamental truth, that the Son of God was made man in order to make us gods ; and that this deification, in which consists the happiness of the predestinated, is the chiefest and most beautiful work of religion, the grandest design of God, and the noblest object of ambition for the heart of man. It is the chiefest and most beautiful work of religion, because all its powers tend to transform man into God by means of three *hierarchic operations* : the first of which turns us towards God by the avoidance of sin, the second draws us near to Him by the imitation of His virtues, the third unites us to Him by the participation of His glory. It is also the noblest object of ambition for the heart of man, an object corresponding to the grace which religion imparts to him ; because his nature being at the same time poor and noble, he desires always to rise and advance in honour, in wealth, and in peace, until he is perfectly satisfied. Now this can never be until he elevates himself up to God ; for whatever is capable of receiving God, can never be filled except by God. Capacity has relation to action, emptiness to fulness, want to sufficiency, the image to its prototype. Infinite capaciousness, therefore, must have relation to an act which is infinite, an infinite void to an infinite fulness, the extreme of want to bound-

less wealth, the image of God to God himself. Lastly, it is the grandest design of God; because an Artificer so excellent can have no other design in His external operations than to make a work perfect in itself, as He Himself is perfect in Himself. Now, He can only make a perfect work by uniting it to Himself, inasmuch as perfection not being essential to the creature, it can be found only in the Creator. And as there is only one sun, one primitive and original luminary, which dispenses its light to all the stars; so, in like manner, there is One Only God, one Being of sovereign and infinite perfection, imparting perfection to all other things. In order, then, to render man perfect, it is necessary that God raise and elevate him, that He unite him to His own goodness, that He deify and transform him into Himself by the *rays* of His grace and glory. And because God and man are two extremities infinitely removed, in order to unite them, they must mutually approach either: God, therefore, must descend, and man must ascend; God must commence the union, and man must accomplish it; God must stoop towards man, and man must elevate himself to God. The first of these is done by the Incarnation, the second by Communion. How is this? In three different ways, which will form the subject of this discourse.

#### FIRST POINT.

In the first place, the Son of God, when he made Himself man, took the blessed Virgin for His mother, and by borrowing the most pure part of her blood for the formation of His Body, He contracted with her so intimate an alliance, that they two became one flesh. This was the

occasion of St. Bernardine's saying, that the blessed Virgin is connected with the Son of God by unity of substance and participation of the same flesh, the flesh of Mary having become the flesh of the Son of God. On this account she is compared to the light which illuminated the world during the three first days of creation, from which material the body of the sun was afterwards formed. I am well aware that the Fathers are not all of the same opinion on the subject of this primeval light, which dispelled the darkness of the universe. St. Cyril of Alexandria supposed that it was the element of fire, which, shooting up towards heaven like a luminous globe, shed its rays upon the earth. Others thought that it was the transparency of the empyreal heaven. Saint Augustine considers it as a spiritual illumination from heavenly intelligences. Saint Denys maintains that it was the sun itself, which had not yet arrived at the perfection of its light; but the most general opinion is, that it was a certain shining material or luminous substance, from which the sun was formed upon the fourth day, and therefore it is called by St. Thomas the beginning of the sun. Still, whatever may have been the first light of nature, it is evident that Mary was the first light of grace, which in the fulness of time produced the Sun of Justice. Now, if Mary be the Mother of the Sun, that is to say, Mother of the Son of God by the Incarnation, she is, as a necessary consequence, Mother of the stars by the Communion, I mean of all the predestinated, who cannot live by that divine life which they receive in the holy Sacrament, if they do not recognize her as their Mother, and unless she owns them as her children.

That Mary is the Mother of the elect, is a



privilege of which all the faithful boast. Is Mary the Mother of Jesus Christ only? says St. Bonaventure. No, in truth, she is not the Mother alone of Jesus Christ in particular; but by the most sweet and consolatory grace she is also the universal Mother of mankind.

It is easy to show that she is the Mother of the predestinated in the Communion of her Son. First, because she discharges the functions of a mother: for she nourishes us, and gives us the bread of life. "Come," she says, "eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you."\* In the Incarnation she conceived us by the movement of the Holy Spirit; she brought us forth in the Passion with great pangs; and in the Communion she gives us nourishment. We eat of her bread. This heavenly manna is not formed by the hand of angels; but from the womb of Mary. She bids us "Receive this bread from my hand: it is my beloved Son that I give you." In the second place, she is not only our nurse in this mystery, but our true Mother, because, by virtue of the Communion, we are united to the Body of Jesus Christ as his members; and, says St. Augustine, if we are members of the Son, certainly we belong to the Mother, and have a part in his childbirth.† Add to this, that it is from her flesh that the predestinated derive eternal life, because it is the flesh which she gave to her Son which vivifies them, and is the principle of their enlightenment and glorious regeneration. Predestinated souls are precious as the pearl. The pearl, says St. Ephrem, is begotten of flesh; and the predestinated soul, says St. Augustine, is begotten of that Flesh of the Lamb which He took of Mary, in order that He

\* Prov. ix. 5.

† Sermon. 16.

might give it back again to us upon the table of the altar. You know what the Council of Trent says, in speaking of this ineffable mystery,\* viz., that there are some things to be found in it directly, in virtue of the words of consecration, others only by concomitancy. What is found in the Sacrament in virtue of the words? The Divinity? No, it is there only by concomitancy. The Soul of Jesus Christ? No, it is there only in virtue of its inseparable union with His immortal and glorious Body. What, then, does the Sacrament contain directly in virtue of the words of consecration? That which He took from Mary, that is to say, simply His Body and His Blood.....In the mystery of the Incarnation, says a celebrated theologian,† the Divinity precedes, and the humiliation follows; but in Transubstantiation the Humanity is the first, and the Divinity follows. The Son of God, in pronouncing the words of consecration, might have said: "This is My living and animated Body;" and then His soul would have been contained therein directly in virtue of these words. He might have said: "This is My deified Body;" and then His Divinity would have held the first place. Why did He not desire this? Because, says the same theologian, He did not hold either His human Soul or His Divinity from His mother. So much is this the case that St. Bernardine had good reason for saying, that all the glory and the power of the Sacraments is ended, accomplished, and consummated in the Flesh of Mary, that is to say, in that most precious part of it which the Son of God took to Himself. From these reflections I conclude, that one of the sweetest fruits of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is, that it

\* Sess. 13. c. 3.

† Estius.

gives us the love of purity and feelings of gratitude towards the Queen of Virgins: the love of purity, because at this table we drink the delicious wine which produces virgins, and ever since the Son of Mary gave us His Blood and virginal Flesh, the world has been filled with an almost infinite number of souls who have excelled in the love of this heroic virtue; gratitude towards the Blessed Virgin, for if St. Bernard felt so tenderly towards her, because on three different occasions she gave him a miraculous milk which seemed to issue from her breasts, what ought to be the sentiments of those who so often receive the Blood which issued from her very heart? What return can children make to a mother, who gives them an existence so noble, and nourishes them with a food so exquisitely sweet? "Consider, I beseech you, my beloved brethren," says the Cardinal Peter Damian,\* "how much we owe to the Blessed Mother of God, and what thanksgivings we should render to her, after God, since we receive at the altar that same Body which she gave birth to in the manger, which she carried in her bosom, which she wrapped in linen clothes in the cradle, which she reared with maternal care and tenderness, and that we drink her Blood in the Sacrament of our redemption! There is no tongue that can worthily praise her who nourishes our souls with the most pure substance of her *womb*, nor any heart that can worthily love her."

#### SECOND POINT.

THE Son of God made Himself man in the Incarnation, by the operation of the Holy Ghost who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin, and

\* Serm. de Virg. nativ.

coming upon her with the rich effusion of His grace, produced in her womb the highest work of divine love. Theologians distinguish in God two kinds of productions; the one sort inward and indwelling, the other sort external: the first of these are proper and personal, the other sort are common. The Eternal Father produced the Son by an *Indwelling* action, an action which is so peculiar to Him that it appertains to Himself alone. The Son conjointly with the Father produced the Holy Spirit: this action is peculiar to Them; the Holy Spirit cannot produce any other. But on the other hand, all external productions are common to the Three Persons, because they proceed from the divine power which is a principle common to Each. From hence it follows, that the Father and the Son worked with the Holy Spirit in the mystery of the Incarnation, which being an outbreak of the Divinity beyond Itself, must be a work common to the Three Divine Persons who produced it. Still this does not prevent us from remarking in it some affinities which are incommunicable, and are effected, so to speak, by One Person only. For instance, who does not see, that the hypostatic union relates particularly to the Word—*not as the principal operation, but as the term*, which is the support of the nature of man and the foundation of his being, as well as of his glory? This ought not to surprise us, for although this master-piece of divine love is not an intrinsic production, immanent in God, still it can be truly said that God is indwelling and enclosed in His own work, so that it is not strange that One Person has certain particular and personal relations which are not discovered in the case of the others; and thus it is that the Holy Spirit intervenes in this mys-

tery in a manner which is peculiar to Himself, not by operation, but by donation. The operation is common to the Father and the Son, but the donation is proper to the Holy Spirit, who communicates Himself to the Son and the mother: to the mother to sanctify her womb, and make ready the resting-place of the Word; to the Son to anoint Him with the unction of the Divinity, and order the course of His wonderful life.

Now I say, what was done in the Incarnation, is done also in the divine Eucharist, not in an equal, but in a proportionate degree; that He intervenes in this mystery, and has a great share in the deification of our souls, and that for the following reasons:—

The Holy Sacrament, according to the thought of the Fathers, is an extension of the Incarnation, in virtue of which, the Son of God, as St. Augustine says, incarnates Himself in the hands of the priest, as He did once before in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. “O wonderful power of Priests, whose hands, like the Virgin’s womb, bear the divine Word, who daily renews his Incarnation upon our altars! O celestial and divine mystery which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost operate by your ministration!” Now observe the consequence which must be deduced from these words. The Holy Sacrament is an extension, a continuation, a renewal of the Incarnation: the Incarnation is a work of love in which the Holy Spirit intervenes in a particular manner, so that if it were possible that He should be absent from the place of its operation, He would without fail be found present at the hour of it. It is therefore necessary that He be present at the moment of consecration in which this mystery is renewed. The Blessed Virgin asked,

“How shall this be done?” and the angel answered, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.” In the same manner, says St. John Damascen, if you ask me how the Body of Jesus Christ is made, I make answer, the Holy Ghost comes upon It, and makes by His power that which our minds are too weak to comprehend. On this account it is that in the liturgy of St. James, bishop of Jerusalem, which is received throughout Greece, the priest prays that “the Holy Ghost, by His all-good, holy, and glorious presence, may sanctify the bread and make it the Body of Jesus Christ.”

Moreover, the Holy Sacrament is a mystery of union, the proper effect of which is to unite us to Jesus Christ, to give us His Spirit, to make us live His life, and to make us in consequence the children of God. What is the Communion? It is an action which conveys God into the inward heart, and gives us spirit and life by the intimate union we have with him. Now, I ask, who is it that effects this loving union, but the Holy Ghost, who is called by St. Chrysostom, the knot that binds us to Jesus Christ? Who give us the life and spirit of Jesus Christ, but He who is the Spirit of love, the Spirit of adoption, who makes us children of God? For it is only by adoption that we are God’s children. There are three only ways in which God can have children: by eternal generation, by temporal generation, or by election. By eternal generation He begot His only Son, the uncreated Word; by temporal generation He begot the Word incarnate. It remains therefore that we are His children by election, and not by generation, consequently we are children by adoption, conceived by the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the

Father and of the Son, and the indissoluble bond of the Holy Trinity; for adoption is an act of wisdom and of love. Love is the father, wisdom is the mother. Wisdom makes the choice, love accepts and confirms it. For this reason St. Augustine says, that adoptive fathers do by election what they are unable to do by nature. Now, wisdom is the attribute of the Son, and love of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must therefore contribute to our adoption, and in order to be children of God, we must be animated and filled with the Spirit of God.

Finally, the Holy Sacrament is the Sacrament of our sanctification and perfection, it is the fountain of grace and the germ of glory, which are the two principles of our deification. Now the Holy Ghost sanctifies the Church and glorifies the souls of the faithful; He must therefore have a part in this mystery, in order to sanctify and to deify us, since it is for this that He came down from heaven, and His principal employment upon earth is to transform us into God, and make us by grace what God Himself is by nature. In truth, if the deification of man is nothing else than the communication of grace and glory which exalts the saints into a resemblance to God, is not the Holy Ghost the source of grace who sanctifies our souls and leads us in the path of glory? He is the principle of our sanctification and our guide to eternal happiness. "For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." If this be the case, where, let me ask, does the Holy Spirit pour out more abundant grace, than in the *Sacraments* of the Church? and of all the Sacraments, which is the most fruitful and the most active; is it not the Sacrament of the Altar? In the other Sacraments He gives portions of

grace, here He gives its fulness; the others are streams, but here is the source; elsewhere we have the fruits, but here is the tree which bears them; elsewhere the gifts, but here is the Giver of all gifts. It is for this reason that the Fathers of the Church are accustomed to say, that at the moment of consecration the Holy Spirit descends upon the altar; that He overshadows the host, as He once did the Blessed Virgin; and that what passed within her at the moment of the Incarnation, still takes place at the moment of Communion, in the souls of those who participate in the divine mysteries. In the womb of the Blessed Virgin, He formed the Head of all the predestinated: in the heart of the faithful He forms the body. At the Incarnation He instantaneously formed the sacred Humanity of the Son of God: at the Communion He instantaneously pours forth His sanctifying grace, which makes us children of God. At the Incarnation He undertook the conduct of the divine Word: at the Communion He undertakes the government of predestinated man. At the Incarnation He waited the consent of the Blessed Virgin, and worked only together with her: at the Communion He demands the answer of our wills, and accomplishes our deification only in co-operation with ourselves.

This is a truth which demands the deepest consideration. Let those who are children of God know, that they are moved by the Spirit of God, in order that they may act themselves and do that which is right, and when they have so done, that they render thanks to him who caused them to act.\* For he works in them to the end that they may work, and not that they may remain idle. Mark this, O Christian soul:

\* S. Aug. L. de corrup. et grat.



Those good thoughts, which the Holy Ghost inspires at Communion, must not be given in vain; you must correspond to them faithfully and beware of choking the holy movements of his grace. Oh! if we did but cherish them thriftily, to what a height of sanctity might we not arrive. But, faithless cowards that we are, either we do not work at all, or if we work, it is not with a true zeal for God's glory, or supposing we have some spark of love, it is soon quenched by our natural lightness and inconstancy. Which of us can say with the apostle: The grace conferred upon me in the adorable Sacrament has not been in vain? Where are the fruits of our frequent communions? Where is that gentleness of the children of God which we ought to have who eat the Flesh of the Lamb? Where is that humility which the Son of God teaches us by His profound self-abasement which He exhibits in this mystery? Where is the charity which ought to burn in our hearts, after having come out from such a burning furnace of divine love?

### THIRD POINT.

THE third principle which has a part in the mystery of the Incarnation, is the union of the Word to man's nature, by a bond so close and so strong, that man becomes one person with Him. I say that the divine Eucharist, by proportion and by relation, unites all the faithful who receive it, in so close a union of their bodies and souls with the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ, that they make with Him, says St. Chrysostom, one body; one Jesus Christ, says St. Augustin; one God, says St. Chrysologus. For we must not suppose that the Sacrament operates merely

a union of heart and spirit, founded upon sanctifying grace. If this were all, it would indeed be a great favour: but it is a favour common to the other Sacraments; and, as the apostle says, Whosoever attaches himself to God, becomes one spirit with Him. Neither is it a simple union or local presence, as it would be if Jesus Christ dwelt in us corporally, and we became, to use the expression of St. Cyril, men who carry Jesus Christ in their bodies, though to bear within our breasts a treasure so infinite, would of itself be an honour beyond all comparison. But the Fathers speak in terms much more high of this deifical union. They say, that in receiving the divine mysteries we do not only bear Jesus Christ within us, but we are united with Him, we are made one body with Him. O man, consider the honour you receive and the table to which you are admitted. That which makes the angels tremble with a sacred dread, that which they dare hardly look upon, because of the light and dazzling brilliancy which surrounds it, this same substance is what nourishes you, to which you are united, and by this you become the same body and the same flesh with Jesus Christ. Hence the Fathers infer that being members of Jesus Christ, and making, according to the apostle, one and the same body with Him, we are by consequence all Jesus Christ. "Do you understand this, my brethren," says St. Augustin—"do you well comprehend this?—If it be so, marvel at God's grace towards us, and tremble for joy: we are all Jesus Christ." He proceeds further still, and concludes that being Jesus Christ we are God Himself; that it was for this end that He was made man, to exalt men to the divinity. He carries man, that man may fall no more; He makes

celestial what He formed from the clay of the earth. He animates with the divine Spirit, what He had animated with human breath, and so elevates him up to God, that He takes away from him all that is sinful, and death, and labour, and pain, and the dust of the earth. To tell how this is done in the divine Eucharist, is a secret which can be known by faith alone.

It is, says St. Augustin, a mystery of unity which God has consecrated at the table of angels, being pleased to impart to us the effect, without giving us the knowledge. In whatever way I view this adorable Sacrament, I discover in it our union with God, both in truth and in figure. In truth, because that union is here wrought in effect; in figure, because it is here signified. If I consider the species of bread and wine, it is a mystery of unity, because as many grains of wheat make the same bread, and many grapes the same wine, so in like manner the same mystical Body of Jesus Christ is formed of many Christians. If I penetrate still deeper, into what is contained under the species, it is also a mystery of unity; for I find there three different substances, united in one person, viz., the Body, the Soul, and the Divinity of Jesus Christ. If I regard all that is here contained, and the species under which they are hid, and in which they are held, this is also a mystery of unity; for I am taught by this that as the Body of the Son of God is, as it were, united to the species of bread, so He unites Himself to us by a true and effectual union, though at the same time it is inexplicable. The Holy Sacrament is therefore a mystery of unity, because it works unity; and it signifies unity because it is the figure of it as well as the cause. If you ask me how this is done, I acknowledge my ignorance;

it is a mystery which I believe, but do not understand. St. Cyril makes use of the comparison of two pieces of melted wax which intermingle with each other and make one body; thus, says this Father, whosoever receives the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, unites himself so closely with Him, that Jesus Christ is found in him, and he in Jesus Christ. I revere this thought of St. Cyril, but the mystery is too deep for my understanding. Saint Thomas explains this ineffable union by comparing it to a graft on the stock of a wild tree, quoting the words of the prophet: "I myself will take of the marrow of the high cedar, and will set it: I will crop off a tender twig from the top of the branches thereof, and I will plant it on a mountain high and eminent. On the high mountain of Israel will I plant it, and it shall bear fruit."\* This cedar, says the angel of the schools, is the Eternal Father, the high branches are the patriarchs of the Old Testament; its top is the Blessed Virgin; the marrow of the cedar is the Eternal Wisdom; the tender twig cropped off from the top, is the flesh of Mary. The Holy Spirit taking the marrow of the cedar and the twig from the top, unites them together at the Incarnation; then he inserts this divine graft in the hearts of the faithful at the time of communion, when they are lifted up from earth by their fervent desires. Then it is that the heart, which of itself is only a wild tree, becomes fruitful in good works and produces every kind of virtue. I admire this idea of the great saint, but I do not penetrate the mystery.

Saint Augustin explains it by the intimate union of food which is changed into the substance of him who eats: but with this dif-

\* Ezechiel xvii. 22.

ference, that it is not the Christian who changes this heavenly bread into his substance; but it is the bread which by its own virtue changes and transforms him who eats it. This hidden virtue causes me delight, but it does not give me understanding. All that I can do is to exclaim with St. Cyril, "O the great glory of a Christian! O the greatness of God's love! by the participation of these divine mysteries he becomes one and the same flesh and blood with Jesus Christ." St. Cyril compares the union of the Sacrament with that of the Incarnation, which has given occasion to St. John Damascen to say that the divine Eucharist exalts us higher than the angels, not on account of our human nature, but by our union with God. Saint Hilary carries out this thought to its extreme consequences, when he says that we must not seek for any other pattern of this wonderful union, than the *circumincension* which unites the Three Persons of the Trinity; and this is the meaning which he gives to those words of the Son of God, "I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." If, he says, Jesus Christ had spoken only of a union of wills, why should He unfold so clearly the order and the method which He preserves in the consummation of this unity? unless it be to teach us that as He is in the Father by the communication of His Divinity, and we in Him by the participation of our humanity with which He was clothed at the Incarnation, He is also in us by the participation of His Humanity and His Divinity which He gives to us in the Communion. What heart would not be ravished by the sublimity of these mysteries; but at the same time what understanding would not be dazzled by them? O sacrament of piety! O sign of unity! O bond

of charity! Let us here break off: and after having acknowledged the honour which God has granted to us, the little faith that we have in these mysteries, and the little fervour with which we approach them, let us conclude this discourse with some practical considerations, and observe what holiness is necessary to consummate our deification, and make us partakers of the divine nature.

We all of us love what is great; and this natural desire of honour, increasing with our years, becomes a torment to us, because nothing is found to satisfy it. Would you fully satisfy your ambition? Draw near to the Son of God. "Come to Me," He says, "all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." You seek for honour—come to Me, and I will crown you with glory; you desire to be great—come to Me, and I will make you gods; but come to Me in the same manner that I have come to you. This holiness is the path by which we must lift ourselves up to God in the Communion, the same by which God came down to us in the Incarnation.

Approach, therefore, the holy table with a desire of entire conformity to the Incarnate Word, and consider how great should be your purity, humility, charity, and sanctity, if you would unite yourself to Him who is the model of all these virtues. Let this be the subject of your meditations during the course of this Octave.

MEDITATION FOR THE FESTIVAL OF THE BLESSED  
SACRAMENT.

*Of the honour and respect we owe to the Holy Sacrament.*

“Venite, adoremus, et procidamus, et ploremus ante Dominum, qui fecit nos: quia ipse est Dominus Deus noster, et nos populus ejus, et oves manus ejus.”

“Come let us adore and fall down, and weep before the Lord that made us. For He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture and sheep of His hand.”—Ps. 94.

FIRST POINT.

Consider that the presence of the Son of God in the Eucharist ought to produce in us the deepest reverence. The presence of God ought to impress us with veneration and restraint in all places, because its space fills all things, and its sanctity consecrates all things, making the entire universe its temple; but there is no place in which it ought to produce such great feelings of awe as under the species in the holy Eucharist. This is the throne of His glory upon earth, upon which His sacred Humanity is seated to receive the homage of men, and thus to repair the ignominy of the cross. The honour which you render to Him ought, if it be possible, to answer to the shame which your sins were the occasion of His suffering, and if you have faith, you ought not to be less moved by this awful mystery, than if you saw Him really die upon Mount Calvary. The altar where He rests is the holiest place in the whole world, because it is, as it were, the source of all holiness, from

whence we derive our sanctification, our perfection, and our deification. He comes with a wonderful majesty, surrounded with a multitude of miracles, which the divine Omnipotence works in His regard to render His Presence more august and venerable. The operations of His grace are inexplicable, the mysteries which He continually renews are incomprehensible: and if it be true that the whole life of Jesus Christ was one continued Mass, which begun at the manger, and finished upon Calvary, it may be said that the Mass is nothing else than the life and the death of Jesus Christ, the mystery of which will continue to the consummation of all things. All His perfections, whether human or divine, are here made clearly manifest, and serve to display the glory of His Humanity, of which He is in this Sacrament so jealous, that He gives it precedence of His Divinity, which is, so to speak, the cause of His presence, and, according to the language of theologians, comes in His company and His suite, as if to do honour to His Humanity.

The angels, says St. Mark in his Liturgy, are in ecstasy; and St. Chrysostom, who, to the great consolation of his soul, often witnessed the presence of these holy beings at the altar, assures us, that at the moment when the priest pronounces the words of consecration, the heaven opens to give passage to those happy spirits who come in crowds to adore the Holy of holies, continuing in His presence with the deepest reverence, until the consummation of the divine mysteries. If the angels of heaven, whose state is so noble, and whose nature is so excellent, are nevertheless so humble and respectful, so lowly in the presence of Jesus Christ, with what feelings of veneration ought



you to present yourselves before His throne, you who have nothing to make you considerable in His sight? Who are you, that you dare to mingle with the princes of His court, and claim the favours which the King grants to His favourites? An atom is a small thing, compared with the sun's rays; but you are incomparably less before God: you are nothing. See how men of the world conduct themselves when they have to treat with a sovereign: the very thought of having to speak to him, the sight of his throne, the waiting for his entrance, cause them emotion. They stand before him with the greatest respect, and though their heads are filled with a multitude of business, they dismiss every thing from their mind except the attention they owe to him. What is the cause of this? Nothing but a mere human respect for a person often of more limited intelligence than themselves, and fewer natural good qualities. How much more, then, ought the holiness, the majesty, and the greatness of the Son of God to wrap you within yourself, and to hold you in the deepest reverence. Can you behold without astonishment the dazzling perfections of this divine Saviour, who purposes coming to you in spite of your unworthiness? You ought indeed to say with Solomon, "Is it credible that God should dwell with men on the earth? If heaven and the heaven of heavens do not contain thee,"\* art thou about to lodge this day with me, and abase thyself even to the dust? This Almighty King, the Holy of holies, before whom purity itself is not spotless, is about to take up His abode in my heart, which is so cold and so unclean. What shall I do to Him? What shall I say to Him? What fitting welcome can I give

\* 2 Paral. vi. 18.

Him? How can I worthily receive Him? Can He desire to enter into a conscience so criminal as mine, or a heart so cold to His love, so divided by its affection for creatures, so little inclined to Him by a perfect conformity to His will? What will He say to me at His entrance? Will He not be indignant to see how badly He is received, how poorly lodged, how unworthily treated? Ah, Lord, how Thy greatness confounds me, how my own baseness humbles me! I am overwhelmed with the weight of Thy majesty, and cannot endure its effulgence: suffer me to hide myself in my own nothingness, and leave Thee all the space; so that Thou mayst be the absolute master of my soul and body, and that they may be occupied by Thee alone.

## SECOND POINT.

*Consider that the reverence we owe to the Holy Sacrament, ought to reach to the most supreme degree of adoration.*

All the Sacraments which the Son of God has established in the Church, says St. Augustine,\* are very wonderful, and merit a particular veneration; but the Sacrament of His Body and Blood surpasses all the rest. God has made It an object of our worship, as well as of our faith; and as the Israelites, seeing the manna fall from heaven, were so surprised, that they were almost beside themselves, and said one to another, "Manhu? What is this?" so He desires that all the faithful should continue ravished by the sight of this mystery of love, of this bread of heaven, which alone, according to the prophecy of Daniel, should be eaten and worshipped, because of the two precious sub-

\* Lib. de Specul. 1, 9.

stances which it contains, namely, the Flesh of the Son of God, which He has given us to eat, and the Divinity, which He has given to be worshipped. This is what distinguishes this heavenly food from ordinary food; and the Fathers of the Church, in order to show this difference, give us no more striking mark than the supreme worship and reverence, both external and internal, which we ought to pay to it. This worship, which is called *latría*, has been always paid to it, it has been the custom in all ages since its institution, and the universal practice of the Church, which has always honoured the presence of the Redeemer with the highest degree of worship. This may be gathered from the ancient ceremony of the Greek Church, where the curtains of the altar are drawn aside at the time of consecration, to expose the holy mysteries to the people, as is done to this day, that they may be worshipped and invoked by all who assist, who then display as great reverence as if they saw the heavens opened. Hence arose the saying, that heaven was opened when the veil of the sanctuary was drawn aside. This holy tradition is confirmed by the opinion of all the Fathers. St. Gregory Nazianzen, in the funeral oration of St. Gorgonia, assures us, that she was miraculously delivered from an incurable disorder, with which she was afflicted, by the invocation and worship of the Eucharist. St. Ambrose attributes the same meaning to the words of David, "We will adore in the place where His feet stood;"\* and vindicates the justice of the interpretation no otherwise than by the divine honours which we pay to this august mystery. The footstool of His feet, says this father, is the earth, and this

\* Ps. cxxxi. 7.

earth is no other than the Flesh of Jesus Christ, which we adore at this very day in our mysteries. St. Augustine falls into the same reflection. None, he says, eat this Flesh without first adoring it. Under the species of bread and wine, which we see, we adore the Flesh and the Blood of Jesus Christ, which we do not see. This respect was so deeply graven in the heart of the early Christians, that it even extended, as we are told by Tertullian, to common bread, which they kept with great care, lest a crumb should fall to the ground, on account of their reverence for the species of the Eucharistic bread. Hence, also, the honour which they paid to the sacred vessels used in the sacrifice, so that those who ventured to profane them were held, says Optatus of Miletus, to be sacrilegious, because, adds St. Jerome, of the holiness they contracted from touching the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. By these remarkable words he teaches us, that if we adore in faith those august mysteries, it is not to the species by themselves, not to the simple appearances of bread and wine that we pay divine honours; these merit no such honour of themselves; but, as in the Incarnation, we adore the Divinity of Jesus Christ, clothed in mortal flesh, which subtracts nothing from its greatness, so in the Eucharist we adore the sacred Flesh under the Sacramental symbols, which conceal the brightness of His glory, without depriving Him of it. You ask me whether I worship the Son of God under the Sacramental veils, or whether I do not. How is it possible that I should not worship? If I did not worship, I should be without life. Then, in adoring these signs you worship the creature? It is the extreme of folly to say this. A king clothed in

purple is worshipped: is it then the purple or the king that is worshipped? Without doubt it is the king. So long as he wears the purple, it is worshipped with him, but no longer. Nobody says to the king, "Take off your royal robe, and descend from your throne, that I may worship yourself alone." Where can any person be found foolish enough to speak in this manner? Is he not worshipped by all, whilst clothed in purple, and sitting on his throne? In like manner it has pleased the Son of God to unite Himself closely to the accidents of bread. This is His throne, and His royal purple. Who will have the profane hardihood to bid Him quit the habit which covers Him, if He desires that due honour should be paid to Him?

If you are firmly persuaded that, in adoring the Sacrament, you pay homage to Jesus Christ, if you firmly believe that, in partaking of these adorable mysteries, you receive Him, and take His Flesh and His Blood, how is it that you appear there with so little reverence? All that is most holy and most adorable in heaven is upon the holy table; the Lamb is sacrificed for all, the priest makes prayer and lamentation for the sins of the people, a spiritual fire radiates from the altar and diffuses itself around, the angels tremble, and the seraphim veil their faces, all the powers of the unseen world surround you, all the spirits of the just make intercession for you, and seize upon this favourable moment to appease the anger of God which your sins have provoked; but you, instead of uniting yourself with them, and praising your Maker with a holy dread, provoke Him still more by your irreverence: you stand in the presence of God without respect to His infinite majesty, without remembering where you are,

without a thought of Jesus Christ, who measures every step you take, and scans each movement of your body and your soul. O sovereign majesty ! check the heedlessness of my senses, and repress their license ; correct the waywardness of my mind, and impress upon my heart a deep sense of Thy divine presence, which may call back my wandering thoughts, and hold every faculty of my soul collected and absorbed in Thy transcendent greatness.

### THIRD POINT.

Consider that the respect and adoration which we render to the Son of God in the divine Sacrament ought to extend even to trembling and self-annihilation. Adoration, according to the Fathers, is nothing else than a voluntary profession, which we make by our submission, of the sovereign excellence and infinite majesty of His person. It ought, therefore, to produce two movements in our souls : one by which it elevates itself to the sovereign majesty of Jesus Christ ; the other by which it loses itself in its own nothingness. By the first movement the soul mounts from simple faith in the mystery to admiration, from admiration to reverence, from reverence to honour, from honour to praise, from praise to confession, from confession to glorification, which is the highest point in the scale. Faith discovers to it the greatness of God in this ineffable mystery, and gives a high estimation of it : this high estimation throws the soul into ecstasy and transport ; and because we are accustomed to hold in singular veneration whatever appears to us admirable and excellent, we are thus led on to reverence these divine wonders ; by this reverence we are led to honour them

by external signs, the hands and the eyes are lifted up to heaven with pious fervour, as if the body desired to soar upwards with the spirit. From honouring the mysteries, the soul proceeds to praises, which burst forth in thousands of benedictions, accompanied by an extreme desire to publish and confess for ever the mercies of its Saviour, and to communicate to all the world the same feelings of honour, esteem, love, and reverence, which she has conceived herself, in order to spread His glory to every corner of the earth, and His kingdom in the hearts of all men.

But in the same degree that the soul is lifted up by considering the infinite greatness of Jesus Christ, as if she were forced to succumb under the weight of His majesty, she makes at the same time a movement of submission which obliges her to descend to the knowledge of her own baseness; and, again, from this knowledge to contempt, from contempt to confusion, from confusion to trembling, from trembling even to annihilation, not being able, in her extreme desire to submit her whole heart to God, and to testify the greatness of her reverence, to find any place low enough wherein to hide herself.

In this manner ought you to abase yourself before the majesty of God, remembering that the pillars of heaven tremble at the least movement of His will. This has always been the way of the Saints, who have approached the Son of God with a countenance so respectful, a humility so profound, and such deep sentiments of their own unworthiness, as it would be difficult rightly to describe. Many of the Saints even at the hour of death, after having lost all their strength, with nothing but a mere breath of life remaining in them, as if their piety would make one

last effort, have thrown themselves out of their beds when the Viaticum was brought to them, and kneeling with their faces to the ground, their bodies trembling with awe, and their souls overwhelmed with the thought of their own baseness, have adored the Host. Thus have they, by all these outward testimonies of their reverential feelings, condemned our insensibility, at the same time that they serve us as an example. For if the presence of a great man inspires fear, and acts upon his inferiors so forcibly that they stand abashed before him; if the sight of an angel cast the prophet Daniel to the earth, and caused him nearly to die with fear, how ought the presence of your God and Saviour Jesus Christ to affect you! If fear were to deprive you of a thousand lives, it would not suffice. Consider now what follows:—If God were so far to honour you as to make you the instrument of His miraculous power to create a new world, to raise the dead, to call back His Son to life, to save all the reprobate, and bring them from the abyss, with what reverence would you not unite yourself to Him to receive the influence of His power! But are you employed in an action less considerable than this, when you offer the sacrifice of the Lamb which takes away the sins of the whole world? Do you not reproduce the Son of God, or, at least, do you not give Him a new existence under the signs of the Sacrament? Does He not, if I may use the expression, incarnate Himself in your hands? Does He not immolate Himself for the salvation of men? What, then,—does not that tongue tremble which makes Him descend from heaven, and the heart in which He begins a new life, and the hand which touches and handles Him! Let my heart and soul tremble, and my hand which



bears so precious a burden, a burden which the heaven itself cannot sustain without trembling. O Lord, my God, have mercy upon me, for I am seized with fearfulness when I approach the altar to offer to Thee this tremendous sacrifice ; my soul is moved with dread, my heart quakes, and my spirit fails within me. Support me, O my Saviour, and do Thou carry my unworthiness and my weakness, if Thou requirest me to carry Thy greatness.

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DISCOURSE FOR THE FRIDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF  
THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

*The Son of God invites penitents to His table, and traces for them in the Holy Sacrament a model of a perfect conversion.*

“ Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.”

“ Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”—Matt. xi. 28.

All nature seeks after change, because, being imperfect in her works, it is necessary that she change them both in quality and in virtue, in order to bring them up to the point of perfection.

In this respect grace resembles nature ; she also is fond of change, and at every moment is making new progress towards perfection : but one of her most wonderful changes is the conversion of the penitent sinner, which the holy Sacrament works upon our altars. For this reason the holy Fathers call it a mystery of change, a divine alchemy, a loving transforma-

tion, by which the penitent soul is freed from evil habits, is purified, sanctified, deified, and by a happy conversion passes into its Saviour, who is the author of all these gracious changes, who turns our dishonour into favour, our injustice into innocence, death into life, shame into glory, and, as St. Paulinus says, from a state of exile admits us into the kingdom of heaven.

## SECTION I.

*The change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is a glorious work, which contains all the wonders of art, of nature, and of grace.*

To understand this truth, we must presuppose that the Son of God by His grace enters into this state under the species of bread and wine; by a true change of substance into Substance, the substance of bread and wine giving place to the Body and Blood of Christ, through the marvellous power of God, who in this work comprises all the wonders of art, of nature, and of grace. All human art works only upon created substances, content with giving them some new appearance, or clothing them with new qualities. The painter, for instance, who lays his colours on the canvas, imparts to it neither the spirit nor the body of the prince whose portrait he takes. What does he do? He gives to it his likeness and mien. It is not the prince, but his image; it is not the man, but his picture.

Nature is more industrious than art. For she works upon matter, which is a more rude material, and introduces into it substantial forms, so as to produce finished substances. When the sun sends forth his influence into the bowels of the earth, where the metals are

formed, he finds there a crude substance, without either colour or beauty, but little by little he prepares, refines, and purifies it, and by a secret virtue, never to be discovered by man, he expels the gross and inert form of earth, to introduce gold in its stead.

The ordinary power of God is more excellent in its operations, because it works upon nothing, which surpasses the power of creatures. Where was the world before God opened the doors of the abyss to call forth His beauteous works? Who furnished Him with matter to form the continents and the wide-spreading seas, the spacious atmosphere, and the large vaults of heaven, which surround the elements, and enclose all mortal creatures within them? All this cost Him but a word. He spoke, and it was made.

The extraordinary power of God acts more nobly still. It works not upon nothing, as in the creation, not on shapeless matter, as in generation, not on created substances, as the art of man does, but on an uncreated being, and on the Person of the Word. This, O holy and adorable Humanity of Jesus, is the foundation of Thy existence, the most perfect image of the Divinity, and the masterpiece of the Three Divine Persons.

But in the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Son of God, I find all these various operations of art and of nature, of the ordinary and extraordinary power of God, miraculously blended.

Art produces the accidents, and adds them to the substance; but here the accidents are detached from the substance, and remain without foundation or support.

Nature elicits a new form out of matter, and

expels the form under which it before existed: but here one perfect substance takes the place of another.

In creation the hand of God draws an existence out of nothing; but here it annihilates what was before in existence.

In the Incarnation the hand of God unites the divine and human nature in one person; but here it unites God to the accidents of bread in the Sacrament.

Hence it is that, as philosophers divide the stars of heaven into three orders, of the first, the second, and the third magnitude, to give us a more clear and perfect understanding of them; so, among the works of God's almighty power, theologians remark three which mutually surpass each other, viz. Creation, Incarnation, and Transubstantiation. For, if we consider the term from which the act commences, Creation has this advantage, that it makes something out of nothing; and since there is a distance which is negatively infinite between nonentity and entity, the arm which extends from one to the other must be omnipotent. If we consider the term at which the act concludes, the Incarnation is superior, because it terminates in the Person of the Word, who is the support of human nature and the crown of the divine nature. But if we take both these two together, and consider at the same time the commencement of the work of Creation and the termination of the work of Incarnation, Transubstantiation has this great distinction, that, by changing one substance into another, it equals creation by *annihilating an existing substance*, and it approaches to the miracle of the Incarnation by uniting the accidents to the Body of the Son of God.

## SECTION II.

*A penitent soul ought to imitate the change made in the Eucharist, by changing its evil habits.*

Taking for granted the doctrine just now stated, I say that a penitent soul, if it rightly discharge its duties, ought, as St. Paulinus writes, to imitate this change, and enter into the service of God by a perfect conversion, not of substance, but of heart, not of essence, but of action, not of nature, but of life.

Remember the words of the Emperor Gratian, who wished that he could melt and distil his crown and sceptre, his body, and life, and soul, if he could extract from them only one drop of honour to enhance the glory of Jesus Christ. It seemed as if he regarded with a sacred envy the food which the Son of God took during His mortal life and which passed into His substance, preserving by its own destruction the life of God Himself. This was a noble and generous desire, but its accomplishment was too difficult. Here, then, is a method more easy of execution, and more pleasing to God. Do not desire to convert your own substance into that of Jesus Christ for His nourishment; but desire ardently to transform yourself into Him by an entire change of life. This you may do in four principal ways, which he teaches you in this mystery.

First, in the change of bread and wine, there remains nothing of their substance; there remains only the appearance and the species. So in our conversion we must not leave any of our evil habits undestroyed, any of our former customs and faults, but must root up the smallest

fibres. If it be possible, we must preserve nothing but the appearance and exterior of man, whilst inwardly all is divine and nothing human. Man ought to pass into God ; or, rather, God ought to take the place of man, and grace of nature. Crucify, exterminate this enemy to your holiness. Throw down the strong places which serve him as defences ; carry the battle into his entrenchments, into the understanding, where the enemy conceals himself in darkness ; into the memory, which is his arsenal ; into the will, which he makes his slave ; into the senses, which are his spies ; into concupiscence, which is his confident. Raze everything utterly to the very foundations. In the understanding destroy all falsehood and error, all those worldly maxims which pretend to be Christian, and disguise themselves under pretexts of civility, courtesy, or necessity, or of prudence and discretion ; in the memory, that entire forgetfulness of God, and that keen solicitude about earthly things ; in the will, that selfishness and attachment to your own interest, all those specious considerations as to whether your employments, undertakings, and even your best actions, are consistent with your human honour and reputation ; in the imagination, all those dreams of worldly vanity, which occupy it continually ; in concupiscence all that softness of self-love, which recoils with horror from mortification of the senses, from silence and solitude, and pursues the good things of the world with extreme avidity.

Secondly, in the change of the bread and wine, the accidents remain without subject or support. They are, so to speak, around the Body of Jesus Christ ; but neither in His Body nor of His Body. He sustains them, but He

does not lodge them within Him. He bears the whiteness of the host, but He does not Himself receive the colour. He bears its roundness, but He does not assume the shape. It is by Him that these various qualities are supported, but He receives no impression from them. Let it be so also in your conversion; if you cannot suppress all the first movements of nature, if you are not obliged to deprive yourself of all those bodily gratifications which are legitimate, let them still surround you as the feeble accidents surround their subject; let them have no hold on your affections, no entrance into your heart; do not allow them to make any impression upon you. You desire, for instance, to engage in prayer, but no sooner do you apply yourself to it, than a thousand importunate thoughts assail you. Let these empty phantoms flit about your mind, but do not suffer them to gain admittance. Do not be amused by them, or pay attention to them, or give consent to them, or take a wilful pleasure in them. Or, again, you desire to forget some injury you have received; but when the memory of it comes across you, or you see your enemy, you are all in agitation, and, in spite of yourself, perceive the storm to be rising. Let these thunders roll around you, and the lightnings glare, these fiery movements of anger which incite you to revenge; but do not listen to them, do not encourage them, do not assist them. If, says St. Augustine, your anger becomes hot and rebellious, and urges you to have recourse to arms, withhold your hand, and bridle your tongue, lest these should serve as the weapons of your anger, and then do not fear its assaults. It has fury enough, but it has no weapons. The fury belongs to the passion, but the arms are in

your own hands. Subdue this savage monster, take from him the power of doing mischief; and little by little, when he sees that his efforts are useless, he will be constrained to leave you at rest.

Thirdly, the Son of God not wishing to appear openly in the Eucharist, which is the throne of His love, has covered with a veil the brightness of His glory, and hidden His greatness under the deepest lowliness. I know that it is the custom of the world's sages to live in retirement, and show themselves rarely, but this they do to make themselves more admired and honoured. I know, too, that nature hides all that she has most precious, her pearls in the ocean, and her silver and gold in the bowels of the earth; and it does not surprise me that she puts her treasures into such places of safety. I know also that God conceals Himself in the world, as it were in a sanctuary, under the veil of creation; and this I do not consider wonderful, because He is invisible from the excess of light. But in the Sacrament of the altar He hides Himself from humility. He remains in abasement, which is to continue to the end of the world; and if what some have thought be true, that this Sacrament will be retained in heaven, His humiliation will be eternal. Why is this? To teach you that, if you would establish your conversion, you must hide yourself from the world's eyes; to bid you fly from dangerous society and dangerous occasions; or, if you are obliged to appear among men, to teach you how to cheat the world by a holy fraud, to hide sackcloth under silk, humility under greatness, and the fear of God under the most absolute human power and authority.

Lastly, in the change of the bread and wine,



the sacred Body of Jesus Christ, which takes the place of the material food, remains under the species, having all the functions of its natural life suspended. He has eyes, but He does not see ; and He makes no use of His faculties. Whilst in this state, His senses do not exercise their powers of perception, or the body of movement, or His other organs their various functions ; because His sacred Humanity, having in this Sacrament only a mystical existence, and His body being confined in a compass so small that He only supplies the place of a little crumb of bread in order to nourish our souls with life eternal, He remains in willing privation of the use of His senses ; or if He does use them, it is by miracle.

If He is incapable of acting, He is also incapable of suffering. He permits Himself to be carried about, touched, handled, and eaten : and yet is impassible. There have been heretics who have cast the Sacred Host into the fire, but He has not felt the flame ; others have thrown It into the mud, but He has not been defiled ; others have stabbed It with knives, but He has not been wounded, and the blood which issued was not the blood of His veins, but a miraculous effusion. Others have cast It to dogs, who have not dared to touch It ; but if they had devoured It, the Person of the Son of God would have received no injury. Whatever outrage may be done to the Sacrament, the violence goes no further than the species : no effort of any creature can penetrate deeper than this.

I say the same also of your conversion : you must altogether die to every movement of corrupt nature ; you must shut your eyes to the world's vanities ; you must be deaf, and blind,

and dumb, insensible to the allurements of honour or of pleasure ; and this not from stoical indifference, or the dullness of nature, but by a wise election, by perfect conformity and entire submission to the will of God, by an obedience which St. John Climacus calls a voluntary death and the tomb of self-will.

## SECTION III.

*We are obliged, in virtue of the communion, to die to ourselves, and to commence a new life by an entire conversion.*

Do not suppose that this death, and this change of life, is a simple counsel ; rather it is a strict obligation imposed upon all of us by drinking this sacred Blood, and by the death of Jesus Christ, which we preach. What is it that we do when we take this chalice ? We show forth the Lord's death. It is therefore necessary that every one of us should die to the world, and abandon his evil inclinations ; because as no man can be said to show forth the Lord's death who has not buried his own sinful habits, so none can obtain life at this celestial banquet if he does not begin a new life by a holy resurrection, and so continue till the coming of Jesus Christ. Observe here the double obligation which we contract, both at the holy table and after the communion.

What is to be done before receiving the bread of angels ? we must die unto sin. Whoever desires to receive life, must change his life ; otherwise receiving the bread of life, is to him a condemnation to death.\* The high priest used not to enter the sanctuary before he had wept

\* St. Augustin. Sermon. 1. de Temp.

with many tears, fearing lest his unworthiness should provoke the anger of God, and he should be punished with death for his temerity. What then must we say of him who approaches the Holy of holies, with a conscience stained with crime, without feeling, without sorrow, without desire of amendment? Whoever draws near to thy throne, O Lord, should have the dispositions of judgment and justice. Judge, therefore, your own self when you go to the communion, and if you find yourself guilty of any sin which renders you unworthy of participating in the divine mysteries, execute justice on yourself, and efface by sacramental penance the stain you have contracted, before you present yourself at the Lord's table. Prove your own self and examine your heart, see whether you are at friendship or at enmity with God; for the bread you here take, gives life to the good and death to the evil doers.

What is to be done after the holy communion? We must lead a new life, because, by virtue of the divine Eucharist, we are transformed into a new man, even into Jesus Christ. For what is there in this Man-God which is not new? His conception, His birth, His childhood, His doctrine, His life, His virtues, His death, resurrection and ascension, all are new, all full of prodigies and wonders. In virtue, therefore, of the union which you have with Him by the holy sacrament, you ought to take upon you the qualities of the new man, that is to say, to imitate faithfully the conversation of the Son of God, and so practice the virtues He has taught, that Jesus Christ may be said to live in you. If you do not do this, says St. Paschasius, you do not communicate as you ought, for no man can

communicate worthily if he does not pass over to a new life.

Neither must you excuse yourself on the score of your infirmities, for the adorable sacrament supplies a gracious remedy for these; it is not the pattern alone, but also the principle of our conversion; not that it confers the initiative grace, unless as theologians speak, it does so accidentally; but because its effect is to weaken self-love which is the source of sin, and to nourish in our souls the love of God. It is not the remedy for any mortal sins you may have committed, but it is a preservative against those which you might commit.

Perfect conversion implies two things: viz., the destruction of sin, and the avoidance of it. The Blood of Jesus Christ is the cause of both, but in a different manner. It destroys sin by the Sacrament of Penance, it preserves us from sin by the divine Eucharist; Penance imparts the life, the Eucharist preserves it; Penance raises the dead, the Eucharist feeds the living. Penance and the Eucharist are two different fountains, although both derive their virtue from the Blood of Jesus Christ. The fountain of the Eucharist waters, but it does not wash. It serves to fertilize, but not to remove impurities. Purity is a wholesome thing, but fertility is still more desirable. Penance purifies the seeds of virtue, but the Eucharist quickens them and makes them bring forth fruit. Penance is for sinners, the Eucharist is for the just. Penance begins our conversion, the Eucharist accomplishes it. The Fathers teach us the reason of this; it is because the divine Eucharist is the end of all the Sacraments, and therefore, by necessary consequence, their perfection and consummation. If Baptism imparts a new birth, the Eucharist

makes us grow in grace and virtue. If Confirmation, as St. Augustin speaks, makes us the soldiers of Jesus Christ, the Eucharist gives us arms and courage for the battle. If Marriage unites our bodies, the Eucharist unites our hearts, and carries a blessing into our families. If Ordination consecrates priests, it is that they may minister at the altars; the Eucharist is the highest point of their glory, and to work this august and venerable mystery is their noblest employment. Judge by this of the Sacrament of Penance. What does this Sacrament effect? It reconciles the sinner, and translates him from a state of sin to grace; but it does not always take away entirely the corporal punishment he deserves, nor does it root out evil habits, and furious passions, or take away frailty of heart and darkness of understanding. What is it that does this, and puts the seal upon our conversion? The divine Eucharist, whose property it is to transform us into Jesus Christ, by means of a marvellous change which it operates in the faculties of the soul; change in the understanding, by the light which it pours into it; change in the will, by the force it imparts to resist our evil habits; change in the heart, by repressing the violence of unruly passions; change in concupiscence, of which it extinguishes the flames, not in a direct manner, as St. Thomas explains, but according to a certain order and method; or as St. Augustin says, in the same proportion as it increases charity, the increase of charity being the diminution and abolishment of lust; and here is the source of this marvellous change in the human heart, a change which makes us powerful and unconquerable, instead of weak and imperfect, spiritual and heavenly, instead of gross and earthly. It is Thou, O Lord, who art

the author of this marvel, it is the work of Thy love. And if this be true, whence is it, my Lord, that there are so many communions and so few conversions? If Thou hast placed in this Sacrament so bright a light, whence is it that we are so blind? Why are we so cold amidst these flames of love? Why are we so weak, when Thou hast lodged here so many graces? Alas, it is not that thy compassions fail, but it is we that resist the attractions of thy love. Thou willest our sanctification, and we prefer remaining in our sins, and instead of a will obedient to thy laws, we are rebels and enemies to our own happiness. Ah, Lord, heal these disorders, accomplish in me the word of the prophet Simeon: be my destruction and my resurrection, the destruction of my sin, and my resurrection by Thy grace.

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#### MEDITATION ON THE PURITY OF CONSCIENCE WITH WHICH WE OUGHT TO APPROACH THE HOLY TABLE.

*"Probet autem seipsum homo et sic de pane illo edat, et de calice bibat."*

"But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice."—1 Cor. xi. 28.

#### FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER the words of the Council of Trent.  
 "He who desires to communicate ought to remember the precept, let a man prove himself; and the custom of the Church declares and shows that this necessary proof consists in this, that no person ought to present himself for communion, without having made confession to a

priest, if he be guilty of any mortal sin, however great he may believe his own contrition for the sin to be." Weigh well this double necessity in order to a worthy communion; first, the freedom from mortal sin, secondly, the insufficiency of contrition, if a person be guilty of such sin, and the obligation of confession before approaching the holy table. These two regulations are obligatory, not only by ecclesiastical but also by divine command, according to the words of St. Paul; and with regard to the first, it seems to be commanded even by the law of nature, for natural reason informs us, that if we be in enmity with the Son of God, it is an extreme irreverence to present ourselves at His table before we have been reconciled to Him. St. Ambrose says, that no man ought to participate in the heavenly Sacrament who does not fear God, and who either has preserved the seal of grace, or recovered it when lost, in the same manner that the prodigal son was not admitted to his father's table, until he had been clothed in "the first robe." The same order must be observed in this mystery. The wounds of sinners must first be healed by the forgiveness of their sins, and then the bread from the heavenly table is given to them. Do you see the unsullied brightness of the sacred vessels? Our souls ought to be still more holy and more bright, and why so? because it is only on our account that these are so carefully cleaned and burnished. "For Christ our Pasch is sacrificed, therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." What is this unleavened bread with which we must eat the Pascal Lamb in order to a worthy communion? It is, says Tostatus, purity of conscience

which is more important than all other things, for receiving with advantage the Body of Jesus Christ. With what contrition of heart, with what abundance of tears, with what purity of body and soul, ought we to celebrate a mystery in which we receive Thy sacred Flesh, and drink Thy very Blood, a mystery in which what is great is united to what is mean, and human things to divine.

## SECOND POINT.

Reflect how great a sin is committed by him who communicates unworthily, and to this end make use of the rules of sound judgment which theologians give us, viz., the object from whence good and evil actions derive their essential difference, the circumstances which change the species of the sin, or aggravate its guilt, the quality of the person who receives the injury, or of him who commits it, and the evil effects which follow. If we consider the object, the Sacrament which the sinner profanes is the highest, the most august, and most holy of all, and the sacrilege committed is therefore enormous. If we consider the person who receives the injury, it is the Man-God. As man, the injury received is greater than can be inflicted upon any creature. As God, the outrage done to Him, surpasses that of any sin which does not immediately affect His Divinity.

If we consider the person of him who inflicts the injury, it is a man who being more vile than nothing, has the effrontery to outrage his Creator and sovereign Lord at His own table, to the contempt of His infinite majesty, and of all the graces he has received from His bounty. Lastly, if we consider the evil consequences, and the



aggravating circumstances of the crime, its guilt is the deeper, because the sin is not one of ignorance or of frailty, but of malice; and the blackest ingratitude and darkest imaginable perfidy stands in opposition to the greatest effort of God's love towards him. For this reason St. Cyprian places this criminal in the rank of idolaters, saying that he profanes the temple of the Holy Spirit, and overthrows His sanctuary, that he serves at the same time Jesus Christ and Baal, and is at once a partaker of the chalice of Jesus Christ, and of the chalice of devils.

St. Jerome exhibits the horror of this crime, by comparing it to that of Judas, who is the chief of all wicked priests that treat unworthily the Lord's Body. Rupertus says, that he who communicates unworthily, is an infamous robber, steals the children's bread, instead of taking it from the hand of his heavenly Father, and that he is worthy of death.

St. Chrysostom compares the Christian who carries his wickedness even into the sanctuary, sometimes to the Jews who crucified the Son of God; at other times to Herod, who would have smothered Him in His cradle, under pretence of adoring Him.

Last of all, St. Augustine says, that the cross of Calvary, on which Jesus Christ expired by the malice of the Jews, was not so sensible a torment to Him as the crucifixion He undergoes in a conscience defiled by mortal sin. Listen to the reproaches which the Son of God makes to those impious persons who receive Him unworthily. Wherefore, He says, wicked and unhappy servant, do you defile My Body by your infamous crimes? You put Me on a cross more painful than the one to which I was nailed upon Calvary; for that I was willing to em-

brace out of compassion to your wretchedness, but that which you now make Me suffer is unbearable, and causes Me unmingled misery.

THIRD POINT.

CONSIDER the severe chastisement which the Son of God inflicts on those who abuse the Holy Sacrament. It cannot be better expressed than in the words of the royal prophet, and by the curses which he fulminates against the enemies of Jesus Christ in the sixty-eighth Psalm; for they fall with their full weight upon the heads of those who eat the bread of heaven with a profane mouth, and receive it into a heart defiled with sin.

1. The Eucharistic Table becomes to them a snare, in which they are so entangled, that the soul is made the slave of sin, and loses together with the liberty of the children of God, that vigour which it before had, enabling it to do good, and to withdraw from evil.

2. It is a stumbling-block both to them, and to all others who know their wicked lives, and who are made indignant at seeing so many crimes committed under the mask of apparent devotion.

3. It is a thick cloud which obscures their understanding, and covers it with such gross darkness, that they can no longer bear the light of heaven, and the brightness of eternal truth; they are so strangely blinded, that they see night in the midst of the day, and falsehood and error in the presence of Incarnate Wisdom.

4. It is an insupportable weight under which their will is oppressed, and by which the violence of their evil inclinations is strengthened, instead of being diminished, and their tyranny is

doubled ; and therefore it is that they are always bowed down to the earth, and are incapable of any generous effort to escape from their wretchedness.

5. Add to this the terrible anger of God, which they draw down upon themselves by making the chiefest of all His favours to them, the occasion of the greatest possible outrage against Him. After this, it is no wonder if He sensibly withdraw from them both temporal and spiritual blessings, if He take away from them their goods, their health, their reputation, and sometimes also life itself.

6. And when they are thus abandoned to themselves and their own passions, what can we expect from them, except that they fall from depth to depth, and link crime to crime in a fatal chain, which terminates in hardened impenitence ; for it is certain that no class of sinners more quickly become obdurate than those who make a bad use of this most holy of the Christian mysteries.

In this respect, I consider them the most miserable of all sinners, because they meet with death where others go in search of life, and are so unhappy as to change their remedy into poison, paradise into hell, the principle of a glorious immortality, into the fatal instrument of their eternal condemnation.

Tremble at the sight of their misfortune, and pray God to preserve you. Do not upon this account withdraw from the Sacrament, but be more careful in your preparation for it.

DISCOURSE FOR THE SATURDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF  
THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*The Son of God invites to His table all who are tempted.*

“Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.”

“Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”—Matt. xi. 28.

ORIGEN remarks, that the Israelites never performed any exploit of war, until they had received the manna from heaven, and seen the water flow from the rock. But after having eaten this bread of angels, and drunk from these miraculous waters, as if they had been inspired with the spirit of warriors, they fought a hundred battles and gained the most signal victories. Our life is a continual warfare, and whoever professes the service of God, must count upon having many enemies to contend with who will leave him no rest. At the moment when he frees himself from the servitude of sin, and the tyranny of the devil, all the regions of hell declare war against him, the world takes its part against him, the flesh prepares all its weapons to shake the firmness of his resolution: so that it is one of the most important truths of Scripture, that he who gives himself to the service of God, must be resolved to endure temptation.

St. Cyprian admonishes us not to undertake this combat before having eaten of the bread of life, and being armed with the Sacrament of

the Altar. No man can ever become a martyr, unless the Church has armed him for the combat; his heart quickly fails him, if it is not warmed and strengthened by the divine Eucharist. Now, the case is the same with temptation as it is with martyrdom; there can be no victory without a combat, and no combat without the arms of the adorable Eucharist. To all therefore who suffer temptation, the Son of God addresses those words of invitation to His table, "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

#### SECTION I.

*The Holy Sacrament presides at the combat.*

THE Holy Sacrament, as St. Eloi says, is a Sacrament of victory, which causes us to triumph over the world, and over the prince of darkness who governs the world. The Son of God is the Head of the Church militant, and He must therefore be a warlike chieftain; He dwells in the Church as it were in His tent, as the ark in the tabernacle, and He is the God of armies. He is like the angel in the pillar of cloud, who marched before the battle array of the Israelites in the wilderness. He it is who presides at our combats, and makes us victorious over our invisible enemies. The ancients believed that the sun was a propitious star which presided over battles: and for this reason the Persians used to carry with their armies a representation of the sun in a crystal globe, which glittered over the tent of their kings. Holy Scripture itself describes the sun as the heart of the heaven amidst the other stars, as a conquering chief in the midst of his troops who fight for the glory of

God. But truly the rays of this beautiful star have no virtue in them to equal those of the Holy Sacrament, which is the sun of the Church. The material sun may shed its light over the victories of conquerors; but it is the Son of God who gives the victory: it is He that bestows the palm, and blesses the arms of monarchs, and crowns their warfare with a happy issue.

Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, when about to engage in battle with Magnentius, had the Holy Sacrament placed in the midst of his army, and exhorted his soldiers to communicate before the engagement. This is the bread of Gedeon which changed into a sword, and beat down the camp of the enemy and made a great slaughter.

Catalacus, general of the army of the Emperor Michael, made all his soldiers receive the Viaticum, before going to fight against the Saracens, who were besieging the city of Messina, and the barbarians were put to flight, being panic-struck by the ark of God.

The Emperor Henry, husband of St. Cunegunda, was fortunate in his battles; victory never forsook his arms, and to fight and to conquer was to him one and the same thing. Peter Damian gives us the reason of this. It was because he was a virgin palm-tree, which was always kept in vigour by the Blood of the Son of God; and because the Eucharistic Sun dazzled the eyes of the vanquished with its rays, whilst it crowned the conquerors.

Robert, whose piety is one of the brightest ornaments of French History, having laid siege to Melun, the walls of the town fell down whilst he was assisting at Mass; and the divine mysteries, more powerful than the other weapons of

his warfare, opened a miraculous entrance into the conquered town.\*

Godfrey of Bouillon, when besieging Jerusalem, is reported by William of Tyre, to have caused all his army to communicate before leading them to the assault; he accordingly succeeded in his design, and had the glory of replacing the Son of God in his possessions, and bearing him into his own capital city, not on the shoulders of his warriors, as was the custom of old, but in their hearts and within their bowels.

Alphonso VIII., king of Castile, in the year 1252, challenged two hundred thousand Saracens, and only lost eighty-five of his own men in the combat. His soldiers had also all received the Communion; the arrows of death were not able to wound them.

Finally, when Abderame was leading an infidel army of three hundred and sixty-five thousand men into the heart of a Christian kingdom, with the design of overthrowing the church of St. Martin, and establishing the worship of Mahomet on its ruins; he was opposed by Charles Martel, on the field of Tours, who defied all his host in their battle array, and gained a wonderful victory with a loss of only fifteen hundred men. Would you know how this was done? He had communicated before he engaged in the fight, and as the Egyptians in ancient times, used to represent the deity of the sun, with a thunderbolt in his hand, placed in the middle of a sheaf of wheat, in like manner he carried the thunderbolts of war in the Eucharistic bread, which is the wheat of the elect children of God.

These prodigies sufficiently show that the

\* Literally, 'The Canon of the Mass breached the walls.'

greatest kings are indebted for the honour of their victories to the Blood of the Lamb. But if it is such a source of strength in mere earthly combats, it is of still greater efficacy in spiritual engagements, and in that never-ending war which we carry on against the evil spirits. In truth, it is our sovereign remedy under all temptations. It is from hence that we are furnished with weapons against our spiritual foes, and with strength to wield them; this is our succour and defence, and our tower of shelter, as well as a recompense to encourage us to the battle.

## SECTION II.

*The Holy Sacrament provides us with arms to engage our enemies.*

I SAY in the first place, that the divine Eucharist is an arsenal, whence we procure arms for combating our invisible enemies.

The Fathers often compare the altar on which the Holy Sacrament reposes, to the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin; and St. Ambrose seems to give it this advantage, that whereas the Blessed Virgin conceived her Son mortal and passible, the altar receives Him glorious and immortal. Proclus says, that when the Son of God came into the world, He took arms in the womb of the most pure of Virgins, with which to combat death. Her womb, to use the expression of the Abbot Gueric, was the first tent in which He lodged. And Scripture itself, in the sense which the Church puts on its words, seems to say that He came forth all in arms; and in another place we are taught by the prophet Isaiah, that He begun from that moment His warfare with the serpent. The arms which



He took, were the weakness of our human flesh, which He clothed with the power of His Divinity. It is said by an excellent interpreter of Scripture, that He came forth as it were a worm of the earth, as if He were a bait to excite the voracity of the dragon, who waited to devour Him. But under this weak appearance, the Divinity was a hidden hook, which pierced the dragon with a mortal stroke. In this respect, the altar resembles the womb of the Blessed Virgin; it is the tower of David, in which we find every sort of weapon, offensive and defensive. The Christian who is attacked by importunate temptations, comes to it as a small worm, a bait which the devil desires to devour; but the Flesh of the Son of God, hidden in his bosom, is a hook by which the monster is grievously wounded. Fear not, faithful soul: though thou art the weakest worm of the earth, and the pride of thy enemies appears like a mountain ready to fall upon thee, thou shalt break the rocks and grind them to powder. The weapons of thy warfare are invincible, thou hast the Flesh of the Son of God within thee, and the arms of His Passion without.

Truly, in this mystery the Son of God gives us the weapons of His cross, as Jonathan gave to David his sword and his bow, and his shoulder-belt, when he saw that he was persecuted by Saul. What is the sword of God? and what is His bow with which He defeats our enemies? It is the cross, which has vanquished hell and cut in pieces the body of the crooked serpent, whose defeat is narrated by the prophet Isaiah in these simple words,—“The Lord with His hard, and great, and strong sword, shall visit Leviathan the bar serpent, and Leviathan the crooked serpent, and shall slay the whale that is in the sea.” (Isaiah

xxvii. 1.) It was an ancient superstition of the Persians to worship the sword, because they thought that it dazzled the demons by its shining, and put them to flight. But we have a more just reason for adoring the cross, because it is the sword of the Saviour of the world, and has in it a true and real virtue, by which the evil spirits who conspire together for the ruin of men, are terrified and put to flight.

It is the cross which placed Jesus Christ on His throne, and which made Him reign over the hearts of men. The world which knew Him not in His glory, recognized Him at His death. The cross which was the bed of His sufferings, and the theatre of His shame, is now the organ of His power, the instrument of His conquests, and the sceptre with which He rules the universe. The kings of the earth rule with an iron sceptre, but Thy sceptre, O my Saviour, is of wood; they carry in their hands this emblem of their power, but Thou bearest Thine upon Thy shoulder; they place their strength in the multitude of their soldiers, but Thou, in the number of Thy wounds. They wear a crown which is outwardly of gold and inwardly one of thorns, but Thou dost bear a crown of glory in Thy heart, and wearest a crown of thorns upon Thy head; but it is those thorns which crown Thee king of our hearts, and repair the ruins which the spirit of darkness causes in Thy dominions, by means of his temptations. Temptation does dishonour to Jesus Christ: in the human understanding it dishonours Him, by illusion and error; in the will, by revolt and disobedience; in the heart, by ambition; in the body by lust; in His wealth, by avarice; in His power, by pride. All this is repaired by the cross. It glorifies Jesus Christ in the human understanding, by faith; in the will, by submis-

sion ; in the heart, by charity ; in the body by mortification ; in His goods, by his contempt of riches ; in His power, by the contempt of honour. Temptation leads man into sin and makes him despise the graces which God offers him, the crown which He promises, the treasures He holds out, and the glory He prepares for him. The cross, on the other hand, leads man to repentance, to the contempt of riches, which he tramples under his feet that he may become the spouse of poverty ; to the contempt of honours, which he flies from, in order that he may embrace humility ; of pleasures, which he quits, that he may preserve the gift of chastity ; of the world, which he renounces, for the sake of a heritage in heaven. Temptation draws man from the service of God, by the fear of the great, which seduces him to wickedness ; by the persuasions of worldly wisdom, which entangle him in error ; by the example of his equals, who confirm him in wickedness ; by the artifice of devils, who fill his imagination with false hopes, and vain apprehensions. All these the cross repairs. It triumphs over the great, above whom it is exalted ; over the wise whom it confounds ; over torments, which it scorns ; over death, which it disarms ; over the devils, whom it puts to flight. Finally, temptation dishonours God : in heaven, by the fall of the angels ; in the air, by the presence of the powers of darkness, with which it is filled ; on the earth by the malice of men ; in hell, by the insolence of Satan, who there exercises his empire. The cross on the contrary, glorifies God in every place, in the universe which is the house of God ; in man, who is God's temple ; upon earth, which is His footstool ; in hell, which is His prison ; and in heaven, which is the throne of His Majesty.

Now it is especially in the participation of the divine mysteries, and the use of the Holy Sacrament, that the Son of God applies the merits of His passion and the virtues of His cross. It seems to me, that in giving us Himself in the Communion, He presents to us His cross, and addresses to us those words which Jeremias once spoke to the brave Machabeus, when he gave him a sword to fight against the enemies of God,—“Take this holy sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people Israel.”\* Remember, says Jesus Christ, My cross, when your temptation is the strongest. Never quit hold of this sword, but arm yourself with the thought of My sufferings: these are the weapons with which I triumphed over the world and over hell, and which will render you victorious over your enemies, if you know how to use them aright.

## SECTION III.

*The Holy Sacrament gives us strength to combat against our enemies.*

THE Son of God not only gives us arms against our foes, but He imparts strength that we may use them. It is, says St. Ambrose, at the table of the Lord, that the faithful acquire the qualities of the eagle. Righteous souls, who have the force and the courage of eagles, crowd around the altar—“for wheresoever the Body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together,”—the Body of Jesus Christ is upon the altar, and faithful souls are the eagles. The eagle is the natural enemy of serpents, and continually makes war against them, and in like

\* 2 Machabees xv. 15.

manner, virtuous souls fight against the evil spirits. And what is it but the Holy Eucharist which gives them force for the combat? The great dragon, says St. Paulinus, pines with mortification and bursts with rancour, when he sees that we eat this bread with a sacred hunger, and profit by it afterwards. The Blood of Jesus Christ which stains our lips, causes him to tremble, either because he knows that Blood to be the cause of his loss and ruin, or because it is the secret of our strength. That Blood which thou hast caused to be shed, O fallen spirit, is thine own destruction, and my salvation. When I have drunk of this, I am invulnerable, and I fear neither thy venom nor thy rage. An unknown commentator on the Psalms says, that the Son of God is the bird of the East, spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, which flies with incredible swiftness wherever the will of his Heavenly Father calls him; and that the faithful partaking of His Blood in the Eucharist, derive from thence a noble vigour, which makes them bold and unconquerable: or again, they are like the sparrow-hawks, which engage fearlessly in the fight when they have tasted the blood of their prey. What, indeed, can be feared by a soul which is strengthened by the Blood of Jesus Christ, at whose very sight the devils are mortally wounded and put to flight?

St. Cyprian, or rather the author of the "Cardinal works," says, that by partaking of the divine mysteries, we are made one spirit and one flesh with the Son of God, being children of the Most High, and heirs of eternity. Is it possible to find any more powerful remedy for our human infirmities than the Flesh of the Son of God? I acknowledge that I am more fragile than a reed, but when I am united to the Body

of Jesus Christ, and bound to this strong pillar, who will be able to shake me? If we are one spirit with Him, if, as St. Chrysostom says on the 22nd Psalm, He takes away from us all fleshly inclinations, to give us the force of His own spirit, who can disunite or separate us from His love? We have but one heart, one soul, one spirit with Him. If we have the spirit of life, how can we fear death? If we have the spirit of truth, how can we fear illusion or falsehood? If we have the spirit of strength, how can we fear violence? Moreover, if we are the children of the Most High, endowed with high qualities and deserts, are not greatness and courage characteristics of the children of God? Can we be cowards when we are of the Blood royal of Jesus Christ? Can we be attached to earth, when we are presumptive heirs to the crown of heaven? And lastly, if He makes us partakers of His eternal delights, and gives us the food of angels to eat, is it not in order that He may give to us angelic power and virtue? Certainly when we are required to do battle with the evil spirits, it is very suitable that we should have the heart and the courage of the heavenly intelligences. We must have the ardour of Seraphim, if we are to combat with that miserable and unloving spirit who has placed his seat in the North. We must have the light of Cherubim, to discover the illusions of the Prince of Darkness; the firmness of Thrones, to resist the insults of this unquiet spirit, who is always laying wait to surprise us. We must have the empire of Dominations, to tame our unruly passions, which this turbulent spirit raises in revolt against the reason. We must have the courage of Principalities, to lift ourselves above the grandeurs of the earth, which this proud spirit offers to flatter our

ambition ; we must have the authority of Powers, to chain down this tyrant who would usurp the dominion of our freedom ; the activity of Virtues, to destroy his malice by the practice of good works ; the knowledge of Archangels, to penetrate his deceits and subtleties ; and the charity of Angels, to choke the seeds of discord which he endeavours to scatter amongst us.

Now all this the Son of God does for us in the adorable Sacrament of His Body and Blood. It is a furnace of divine love to inflame us, the sun of the Church to enlighten us, the centre of our hearts whereon our affections may rest, the sceptre of the Divinity which breaks the dragon's head, the root of good works, the source of holy thoughts, the knot of concord, which is the destruction of Satan's power and the increase of our own. For, says the martyr St. Ignatius, our concord is his ruin, and our union is his torment, and our good understanding with each other puts confusion into his mind and despair into his heart.

#### SECTION IV.

*The Holy Sacrament draws down all the angels of heaven for our defence.*

What is very wonderful is, that the holy Sacrament not only impresses on us the qualities of these happy spirits who form the army of heaven, but it attracts them to our succour, and makes them descend together with the Son of God to watch in our defence. For, as St. Gregory says, what faithful Christian can doubt that at the time of the holy sacrifice, the heaven opens at the word of the priest, and the angels descend in crowds to do honour to the mystery ?

The custom of the Greeks is well known, who at the moment of consecration, throw open the curtains before the altar, with as much reverence as if they were opening the portals of heaven itself. This opinion was so universal amongst them, that the words became proverbial, The heaven opens when the altar is unveiled. If then the royal gates of heaven are swung open to give passage to the Son of God, can we believe that the King proceeds forth without His court, and that the angels do not bear Him company? and if they do descend together with Him, is it not for our defence?

O Christian, what have you to fear in the midst of this heavenly host? Are you not most cowardly if you quit the combat, and yield your ground to the enemy, when the Son of God is so near, accompanied by hosts of blessed spirits in arms for your defence?

But supposing that He alone was standing by your side, is He not powerful enough to give you the victory? Under what pretext can you cover your cowardice, if you fly disgracefully whilst in His presence? Stop, timid soul, be firm; or if you have no courage for the fight, at least hide yourself in those loving Wounds which lie open to you as a sure asylum, and a safe covert to shelter you from all the efforts of hell. If distrust about your own salvation causes you disquiet, and tempts you to despair, look upon the wound in His heart as the gate of heaven, which He closes against none, if they desire only to enter in. If it is pride that lays hold on your mind, take one of the thorns from His crown, and with this pierce your heart, and bring down its swelling tumours. If you feel coldness in serving God, look upon His sacred wounds, as a standard to animate you to the combat. When the Em-



peror Constantine displayed the Labarum, all the soldiers exclaimed, "To the work," testifying their courage by this cry of joy. In like manner when you see the host come forth from the tabernacle, and appear in the hands of the priest, look upon it as the standard of your Christian warfare, calling upon you to labour, and encouraging you to the battle. For if our Chief is already crowned with glory, and has ceased from His labours, He still continues the combat in His members, and for this reason He still dwells amongst us as a warrior-chieftain in the midst of His army, and imparts Himself to us in the Sacrament, not only as being the force of the combatants, but also as the reward of the conquerors.

When there are so many motives and considerations obliging us to fight courageously against our invisible enemies, would it not be shameful to fall under temptation and lose the victory, only for lack of boldness and resolution? Be of good courage, what is it that you fear? You have only a vanquished enemy to engage. His strength is exhausted, and yet you tremble before him; he is already beaten, and yet you yield him the victory; he is chained, and you set him at liberty; it is in your power to be his master, and you make yourself his slave.

If the Son of God had not disarmed him, you might have some excuse for your weakness, inequality of strength, want of light, or of resolution and courage; but since Jesus Christ has taken upon Him our weak nature, and in this human flesh brought this long contest to a close, and since He has put His strength, His arms, and the succours of His grace in the holy Sacrament, is it not a shame and a disgrace that you should be so cowardly as to yield to the attacks of satan?

Is this all the gratitude which He must expect from you, after having fed you with His own Flesh and Blood, clothed you with His power, received you into his host, and made you a sharer in His triumph; that you give up without striking a blow, and pass over to the enemies' camp like an infamous deserter, and prefer the most ignominious slavery of the world, to the glory of His kingdom? O the insolent effrontery! O the extreme baseness of a Christian, who would not scruple, supposing such a thing were possible, to cause shame and confusion to God Himself.

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MEDITATION FOR THE SATURDAY IN THE OCTAVE  
OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*Those who frequent the Sacraments and communicate often, ought to have a great command over their passions, and a great courage in opposing the enemies of their salvation.*

"Parasti in conspectû meo mensam adversûs eos qui tribulant me."

"Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me."—Ps. xxii. 5.

FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER that the holy Sacrament is called the bread of the strong, and this it is for three different reasons, which will form the three parts of this meditation.

The first is, because they who eat of it are obliged to subdue their passions, and fight with a good courage against all that trouble the peace of their hearts. The heart of a Christian who receives the sacred Body and Blood of Jesus

Christ in the communion, is a bed on which the King of peace takes His repose. We must not, therefore, suffer any thing to be near which may disturb His sleep. "The bed of Solomon," says the Spouse in the Canticles, "is surrounded by three score valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel, all holding swords and most expert in war, every man's sword upon his thigh, because of fears in the night."\*

The Chaldee paraphrase adds, that these brave warriors do not fear the evil spirits who walk in the darkness of night. The bed of Solomon is the heart of a Christian who communicates, a bed which ought to be covered with flowers, that is to say, adorned with all virtues. His tent is the tabernacle in which the holy Sacrament is kept. This is the tabernacle of God with men, "and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."† The first pavilion which this Captain of our salvation chose upon His entrance into the world, was the womb of the blessed Virgin. But when He went out of the world to return to the Father, He chose for His tent the tabernacle in which the blessed Sacrament is reserved, and the hearts of the faithful as the bed of His repose, that He might always dwell with us, and rest in us. Faithful Christians who communicate frequently, are the valiant ones who surround His tent, and watch about the royal bed. They must therefore all be noble souls, always on their guard, always armed, and ready to encounter their enemies. For it would not be fitting that He should find in the heart where He reposes, rebellious passions, unruly desires, bursts of anger, and covetous desires. The place where He rests must be all calm and peaceful, all the strife and turmoil of

\* Cant. iii. 7, 8.

† Ezechiel xxxvii. 27.

the passions must be banished thence, and this is a task which demands the greatest vigour and courage.

## SECOND POINT.

Consider that the holy Sacrament is called the bread of the strong, not only because the Son of God desires that they who eat of it should be masters of their own passions, and victorious over all the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh, but also because this bread gives them force, vigour, and courage for the combat. For if David was made so strong only by the sight of this feast, what should be the strength of those who are partakers of it! "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him."\* If this be so, we can have no occasion of fear, having so mighty a succour. I am in God, says St. Augustin, what can be more powerful? and God is in me, what can be more sweet? When I am in the midst of the shadows of death, O Lord, I will fear no evil, because Thou art with me. For what can we demand more safe or more strong, than that we be with Thee, O my most loving Saviour? What harm can my enemies do me, when I am in Thy presence? Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me. I will no longer fear when I am honoured by eating at Thy table. Who in truth, says St. Chrysostom, are they that persecute and torment us? The temptations of the enemy, the movements of the passions by which we are tossed, ill-regulated desires, the delights and honours of the world, for those who live in this manner are the persons that suffer the afflictions of the flesh. But

\* John vi. 57.

no sooner do they approach the table of the Almighty, than these afflictions change into consolations, because fleshly things are there taken from them, and spiritual gifts are imparted to them.

### THIRD POINT.

The third reason on account of which the holy Sacrament is called the bread of the strong, is, because it is the reward of distinguished courage, which surmounts all obstacles to perfection, and is victorious over all the enemies of our salvation. If you reflect on all the motives which should animate you to the combat, and all the advantages you derive from victory, you will find that St. John collects them all together as the effects of the holy Sacrament.

The holy Sacrament is given to conquerors as the crown of life. In ancient times the table of proposition used to have on it a crown of gold, to teach us that when we take the heavenly bread at the throne of the Son of God, of which the table of proposition was a figure, we receive an immortal crown.

The holy Sacrament is the pearl of the Gospel, and the precious stone on which the name of the predestinated is engraved, and therefore it is of more value than all the treasures of the world.

The holy Sacrament is the morning star which precedes the day of eternity, and the brightness which heralds the sun of glory.

The holy Sacrament is the tree of life which recruits our strength, and nourishes our souls and bodies to life eternal.

The holy Sacrament is the throne of the

Son of God, from whence He invites sinners under the slavery of Satan to recover their liberty, promising that if they have courage to break their chains, He will make them to sit at His side.

The holy Sacrament is the manna in which all heavenly delights are hid, giving forth its taste and sweetness to those courageous souls who fight for the glory of their divine Spouse.

The holy Sacrament is the true rest of our souls, establishing them in peace immoveable ; it gives the strongest assurance to our minds, so that they become as it were steadfast pillars, firmly bearing on their heads the whole weight of christian perfection, which forms the temple of the Divinity.

Contend, therefore, nobly against all the temptations which attack you, control your senses, and exercise a complete sway over your passions, if you desire to taste the fruit of this divine Sacrament, and keep always in mind these words of your Master, "I am Alpha and Omega: the beginning and the end. To him that thirsteth I will give of the water of the Fountain of Life freely. He that shall overcome shall possess these things, and I will be his God: and he shall be My son. But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."\* God preserve you from this end. Amen.

\* Apocalypse xxi. 6.

DISCOURSE FOR THE SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF  
THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*Jesus Christ is the bread of the poor, He invites them to His table, and consoles them by His example.*

“Exi cito in plateas et vicos civitatis; et pauperes, ac debiles, et cæcos, et claudos introduce huc.”

“Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame.”—Luke xiv. 21.

St. Ambrose, in his Commentaries on St. Luke, excellently remarks, that the poverty of the Son of God is our patrimony, in the same way that His weakness is our strength; and that He consented to become poor, that He might for our sakes acquire great riches. This is a thought full of sweetness and consolation to the faithful, but above all to the poor, who, having no treasure upon the earth, find the true riches in the holy Sacrament of the Altar. For, as St. Chrysostom says, when God takes care to feed us, we need never be afraid of famine.

According to the spirit of the Gospel, poverty is no reproach; the Son of God has made it glorious in His servants, and divine in His own Person. I admire the thought of the Fathers, who say that Jesus Christ, when He came down from the throne of His glory, brought with Him the first blossoms of virginal purity; but that He comes here upon earth to gather the fruits, poverty, because they do not grow in heaven. At the same time it must be confessed that this

virtue derives its origin from on high, and that its root is in God Himself, to whom all its good qualities belong, though He does not suffer its inconvenience.

God tramples under His feet all the treasures of the earth and of the sea, because He has no need of them. He is all-sufficient in Himself, and seeks for nothing external to Himself; He is far above all riches, and the use of riches; it is impossible that they can profit Him, or that He can have affection for them. It is true that He possesses in His own essence an infinite treasure, which renders Him infinitely happy and content; but these goods are common to all, and He is opposed to all private property, except it be as regards what is personal to Himself. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost live in common: no one of them possesses any thing proper to Himself, except His own Substance, which does not hinder their having a perfect community of goods, the same glory, the same dominion, the same riches, the same nature, the same life. So it has also pleased Him that the sovereign good should be the treasure of the poor, and so far from their poverty being the smallest bar to their enjoyment of it, poverty, on the contrary, is necessary in order to their possessing it. It is, therefore, most true that the principle of this evangelical virtue is from heaven, and it cannot be of more noble extraction, because its antiquity is equal to that of God Himself.

From heaven it was brought to earth by the Saviour of the world, who gave the first model of it in His own sacred Humanity, a model so much the more desirable, because He seemed to add new charms to its original beauty. He was born in a stable, and passed His first years in



exile. He passed the rest of His life in a general deprivation of all things. He died naked upon the cross, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. His birth, His life, His death, His burial, bear the plainest marks of His extreme poverty.

From the first moment of His conception, He deprived His Humanity of its proper sustenance, that it might be without stay or support from creatures; and that He might be King of the poor, He voluntarily renounced all the kingdoms of the world. At the moment of His birth, He appeared in absolute nakedness. He was laid upon straw, wrapped in mean rags, stripped of all comfort: because, says St. Cyprian, He had so many charms and attractions, that He needed not to borrow any other ornaments in order to gain our hearts; if He had been surrounded with royal pomp, it would not have been regarded, for the brightness of His rising would have thrown all things into shade.

During the whole course of His mortal life He had nothing of His own, not even a stone to lay His head upon; because, says St. Jerome, He who is the Lord of eternity despises all things that are subject to time, and He disdains to lay His hands upon those miserable spoils which He has given to be the heritage of Cæsar.

As He entered the world, so He went out of it; He was pleased to die lifted up on the cross, to be the further removed from earth, and He reserved to Himself nothing but His thorny crown, that poverty might reign even to the tomb: and, says St. Ambrose, He would only have a borrowed tomb, because the house of the dead was not a fitting place of abode for life.

This seems to be the highest extreme to

which the Son of God could carry this virtue, for what can be added to the nakedness of His birth and His death, unless it be, says St. Augustine, the shame of the cross? Still He has gone yet further; and being unable to satisfy His love of poverty in His mortal life, He still clothes Himself in its habiliments in His impassible existence, and by a rare invention of wisdom, has traced out for us the most perfect example of deprivation in that richest treasure of the Church, the divine Eucharist. Here it is that He is in perfect poverty, in that very place where He bestows on us the perfection of all riches, where He gives every thing He possesses nothing; that which forms the climax of our wealth, is the climax of His poverty; and when He clothes us in the most precious ornaments of His grace, He leaves nothing wherewith to cover Himself but a white veil composed of simple accidents. With what design does He act thus? To console the poor in their disgrace, and to teach the faithful the contempt of riches and detachment from all earthly things.

## SECTION I.

*Five kinds of poverty.*

To understand this truth, we must presuppose five different kinds of poverty, which have been distinguished by the Fathers: poverty of disgrace, poverty of desire, poverty of profusion, poverty of pretence, and poverty of will. The first kind is the poverty of mendicants, whom misfortune has reduced to wretchedness; the second is that of misers, whom covetousness of worldly goods makes poor in the midst of riches; the third is that of prodigals, who ruin them-

selves by useless and extravagant expenses ; the fourth is that of hypocrites, who conceal their wealth under the appearance of want ; the fifth is that of the just, who, being actuated by a generous contempt of earthly goods, undertake a voluntary poverty. The first is a public scourge ; the second a poison ; the third a sieve ; the fourth a temporary shelter ; the fifth a solid edifice. The first is unhappy, because it produces discomfort ; the second fatal and pernicious, because it produces death ; the third inflated, because it puffs up the mind ; the fourth artificial, because it makes use of fraud and dissimulation ; the fifth is glorious, because it entitles us to a crown.

It is plain that, among these different kinds of poverty, the last only could win the heart of the Son of God. It cannot be said that He is poor through any affliction either of nature or fortune ; this would be impossible : not by misfortune, for He is the God of the universe, and the Sovereign Master of all things ; not by accident of birth, for He is heir to all the riches of the Eternal Father, and even His enemies, who took away His life, did not dispute this right. "He is the heir," they said ; "come, let us kill Him, and we shall have His inheritance."\* It is impossible that He should be poor through avarice, for what more can the possessor of all things desire to have ? nor by prodigality, because His treasures are inexhaustible. The crucifix, says St. Chrysostom, is a source whence all may draw, but none can exhaust. The more He gives, the more He abounds ; because all that He distributes by the hand of His power, returns to Him again by the doors of His mercy. Finally, He cannot be poor

\* Matt. xxi. 38.

through hypocrisy or pretence, because He is the truth which cannot deceive, the uncreated wisdom which cannot be deceived, the eternal Word which can conceal nothing, simplicity, which cannot dissimulate, light which cannot hide itself, essential goodness which must appear what it really is. So that, if He was the spouse of poverty during His mortal life, and still cherishes it in the divine Sacrament, it must be a voluntary poverty, for it exists only through love; a happy poverty, because it is the beatitude of the saints; a contented poverty, because it is the fountain of true pleasure; an innocent poverty, because it is the Holy of holies; a royal poverty, because He is the crowned King of glory.

Still, if we look more closely at this loving poverty, which shines forth in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, it must be acknowledged that, though it is so full of love and liberty, it still bears strong resemblance to the others, whilst it does not share their criminality. The poverty of Jesus Christ in this mystery is grievous, because He here suffers all the evils of the poor; avaricious, because what He chiefly longs after is denied to Him; prodigal, because He gives away every thing, even to His own Blood; prudent, and wise, because He conceals vast treasures beneath apparent want.

#### SECTION II.

*The poverty of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament is a wise poverty.*

Consider, first, that if the Son of God in this Sacrament is poor, it is not by constraint, but by design; it is not a forced poverty, but one of

wisdom. You know that He is rich in mercy, in goodness, and long suffering; rich in glory, magnificence, generosity, and wisdom; rich in graces, and virtues, and in all good things. He knows also that He cannot lose what He possesses, and that His riches being infinite, are incapable either of diminution or increase. Why then does He put on a feigned poverty for the sake of amassing wealth, when He is in want of nothing, and it is impossible for Him ever to become more rich? Because He is laying up treasure, not for Himself, but for us. "Neither ought the children," says St. Paul, "to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."\* Now Jesus Christ is the Father of the poor, that is to say, the Father of all men; for when all have sinned, all have need of the grace and mercy of God. What, then, has He done in this adorable Mystery to provide for our wants? He has put on the disguise of poverty, and hidden His royal purple, His crown, and sceptre, and treasures, and every mark of His sovereign dominion, and clothed Himself in poverty, that He may acquire new riches for us. It is in the borrowed robe, under these weak appearances of bread and wine, under the veil of the Sacrament, that He presents Himself to His Father, to obtain all that is necessary for our wants. What is it that He asks? He makes the same prayer that He made on the cross—pardon for our offences against Him, comfort and faith under our afflictions, and fraternal union and charity, which unite many persons into one body and spirit; in a word, all that is requisite for the sanctification of our souls. Our blessed Saviour comes down from heaven in the disguise of poverty, and

\* 2 Cor. xii. 14.

knocks at the door of our hearts, asking an alms from us, and relief in His necessity. Ah, my Lord, what is it that you ask, and what do you seek from me? What is in his power to give, who has nothing of his own but sin? O the greatness of His mercy! It is this very thing which He demands: He wishes to load Himself with our sins, in order that He may efface them by His Blood; He asks for our miseries that he may carry them in His own bosom, and convert them into sweetness and consolation; He asks of us a few drops of water, a few tears of compassion and sorrow; and that He may give us the means of granting His request, by a marvellous contrivance of His wisdom He puts Himself in such a condition that we can exercise in His regard all those works of mercy which are generally done to the poor. We can visit the prisoners, for He has been shut up for eighteen centuries in our tabernacles, and bound to the accidents of bread, as the perpetual prisoner of our love; bury the dead, because He is in a state of death, as an expiatory Victim Who sacrifices Himself to the justice of His eternal Father, and to whom our hearts serve as a sepulchre; clothe the naked, for He has nothing to cover Him but the species of the Sacrament, leaving it to the charity of the faithful to adorn His altars, and furnish such ornaments as decency requires in so august a mystery; lodge pilgrims, for how often does He descend from heaven, which is the abode of His glory, to come and lodge in our souls, and dwell amongst us as a pilgrim, a companion on the voyage of life, and a faithful Guide to heaven, who will bring us in safety to the haven of eternal rest; give drink to the thirsty, for He burns with an ardent thirst for our salva-

tion; feed the hungry, because he is not only our food in the Eucharistic feast, but a Guest Who feeds on the holy desires of our hearts. My repentance, says St. Bernard, is His meat; and if I know what He desires, I am myself His food. When is it that He eats me? When He chastens me. When does He receive me into His bowels? When He instructs me, and gives me wholesome counsels. When does He digest me? When He changes and transforms me into Himself by a perfect imitation of His virtues. Who would not be ravished by such an excess of goodness? and who would not admire the artifices of His love, Who has found so sweet a method of winning our hearts, engaging us in works of charity by so many attractions, and this not from any motive of self-interest, but that He may one day have occasion to enrich us with heavenly goods, and address us as His own dear children with the words: "I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me."\* "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

### SECTION III.

*The poverty of Jesus Christ is a poverty of profusion.*

If the Saviour of the world is ingenious in finding means to conceal His riches and treasures, He is not less profuse and magnificent in expending them. For this reason we must not be surprised at His poverty in this Sacrament of love, which is the source of all riches. His poverty is the effect of His profusion: He is

\* Matt. xxv. 35.

poor, because He is prodigal ; and He is prodigal, because He loves. Love has nothing of its own, it gives away all it has ; and when it has stripped itself of every thing, it gives away its own self, that it may be everything to the object of its love. Moreover, prodigality is the excess of bounty. Now, the Son of God is the highest extreme of bounty, and when mankind is to be served and benefited, He keeps within no bounds. What, indeed, does He keep back, or what has He not given at the altar ? His Body ? O the greatness of the Christian's glory ! says St. Cyril ; O the intensity of the love of God ! by the participation of these divine mysteries you become one body and one blood with Him. We know by experience, says St. Gregory, what the Blood of the Lamb is, not because we have merely heard speak of it, but because we have tasted its sweetness : we do not receive it only with our bodily mouths, but also with the mouth of the heart. His soul is so united to ours that we may say of Him what the Scripture says of Jonathan, that his soul was *knit* with the soul of David. You take, says Tertullian, the Lord's Body, and your soul inwardly feeds on God Himself. It is here that He applies His merits most abundantly, and, as the Council of Trent expresses it, unbosoms the riches of His love. Saul found a temporal and perishable kingdom at the table of the prophet Samuel ; but we find an eternal kingdom at the table of Jesus Christ, and this is the reason, as St. Chrysologus remarks, why He does not call us His brethren until after the institution of the Sacrament, because it was then that He made us His heirs and the adopted children of His Father. So much is this the case that it may be truly said, that in this mystery He has



reserved nothing for Himself, but at once has deprived Himself of all, and what He distributed in parts during His mortal life, He here gives at once with profusion. At the Incarnation the Word was united only to a man: but here He unites Himself to all the faithful, who receive Him. In the Passion He delivered Himself only once to death, but here He immolates Himself a million times every day. During His mortal life He conversed with men only in Palestine, and gave Himself to one nation only; but here He fills the whole earth with His Presence. Lastly, in each mystery of His life, He gave Himself once only, but here He gives Himself an infinity of times in each Host. For it has been well remarked by theologians, that He does not exist under the species, in the same manner as the soul does in the body which it animates. If you separate a part from the body, that part loses all life together with the presence of the soul; but if you divide the host, the Son of God remains in all the parts, though they be separated from each other; and as the smallest possible fragment is infinitely divisible, if it could be so divided by us, He would be found in each particle, and so would give Himself an infinity of times. Of a truth, O God, Thou art prodigal not only of Thy goods, but also of Thyself, through Thy desire of gaining men's hearts! How good it is to ask when we are at the foot of Thy altars! Thy Heart is open, and Thy Hands are pierced, so that they can keep back nothing from us. Henceforth let it be our sweetest employment to speak to God in His secret sanctuary, and to listen for His answering voice. For as we have our wants which He is ready to succour when we supplicate His bounty, so in like manner God

has His, which we cannot neglect without being guilty of extreme ingratitude.\*

## SECTION IV.

*The poverty of Jesus Christ is a poverty of desire.*

THIS is the third kind of poverty which Jesus Christ endures in the Holy Sacrament, resembling the poverty of misers, whose covetousness is insatiable. For although an avaricious person be rich as regards his possessions, he is poor as regards his desires; and as his desires are infinite, so also is his poverty. The thirst which torments him is like the thirst of dropsy; the more

\* The following extract explains the doctrine here noticed more distinctly.

## Propositio.

Christus est totus sub utraque specie et sub singulis unius cujusque speciei partibus sensibilibus, saltem separatione facta.

Dixi. 1. *partibus sensibilibus*: nihil enim demonstrat Christum esse præsentem sub partibus specierum ac eo tenuibus ut sensus nostros omnino fugiant, partes nullo modo sensibiles jam panis et vini apparentiam non haberent. *Saltem separatione facta*, et hoc fides docet, ut ostendimus. De fide vero non est totum Christum esse sub singulis specierum partibus ante divisionem, sed omnino certum videtur. Nam. 1. Concil. Trid. sec. 13, cap. 3, ait in fine: "Totus et integer Christus sub panis specie et sub quavis ipsius speciei parte, totus idem sub vini specie et sub ejus partibus existit." Ibi nullam facit mentionem separationis; eam vero in canone 3. expressit, ne liberas scolasticorum sententias anathemate percuteret, ut narrat Palavic, 1, 12. cap. 1, n. 4. 2. Totus Christus est sub singulis partibus, divisione facta: ergo et ante divisionem; repugnat enim solam divisionem Corpus Christi in parte in qua non erat producere; alioquin laicus vel fœmina corpus ejusdem Christi producere et multiplicare posset, divisiones multiplicando. Ergo.

Non ideo multiplicia admittenda sunt corpora Christi sub unaquaque specie; Christus enim non est in specie modo naturali, seu circumscriptive, ut aiunt theologi, sed modo sacramentali et definitive; non eo modo quo corpora naturalia sunt in locis, bene vero eo modo quo anima est in corpore: tota singulis corporis partibus unita est, et, si Deus vellet, tota uniretur partibus a se divisitis et sejunctis, sine sui ipsius multiplicatione. Sic et Corpus Christi et totus Christus sub singulis specierum partibus existit, sive post divisionem, sive etiam ante divisionem.

Bouvier Tractatus de Sanctissima Eucharistia, p. 42.

he drinks, the greater becomes his thirst: an unruly avarice is his torment, and this disordered passion is the occasion of his poverty, causing him to be in want of all things, of what he does possess, as well as of what he lacks; of what he has, because it does not content him; of what he has not, because he is unable to enjoy it. Such, in some sort, is the poverty of Jesus Christ. It is brought about by His desires, which, if He were capable of suffering in His glorified state, would be the occasion of the greatest torment to Him. He is infinitely rich, if you consider what He possesses; but He is extremely poor, if you regard His desires. Jesus cried out upon the Cross, "I thirst." Drogo, affectionately addressing Him upon these words, says, Ah! Lord, what is the thirst which oppresses Thee? Art Thou more tormented by the thirst, than by the Cross? Thou sufferest the Cross in silence, but complainest of the thirst. Thou sayest, "I thirst," and for what dost Thou thirst, O my Saviour? What is it Thou desirest so vehemently? Thy salvation, thy joy, thy happiness. My thirst for your souls is more sensible to Me, than My bodily thirst. Remark with St. Augustine, that it is not only on the Cross that the Saviour of the world complains of this tormenting thirst; He does so in every place, and everywhere exclaims with the Prophet: They have formed an evil design to ravish from Me the price of My sufferings; but I have run with diligence, and made so violent an effort, that I am faint with thirst. The sinners have taken away My life, and thought to root Me out from the earth; but I burned with the desire of saving them. They sought after My dishonour; but I would have incorporated them in Myself, and taken them into

My bowels as a fresh liquor to quench My thirst. This thirst never quits Him, but He bears it upon Him everywhere, in heaven and in earth, at all times and in all places, but especially in the Sacrament of divine love. Physicians say that there are four exciting causes of thirst: heat, labour, evacuation, and poison. And in the Divine Sacrament four reasons cause the heart of Jesus Christ to burn with the desire of our salvation: the fire of His love, the labours of His life, the shedding of His Blood, and the poison of our sins which He swallowed upon the Cross. That divine love which burns on the furnace of the altar, makes Him say by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah: "Come, ye sons of men; come quickly to quench the thirst that consumes Me." The labours and fatigues of His life, of which in this mystery He comes to gather in the fruits, oblige Him to remain always at the brink of the well, not, as St. Chrysostom says, for the poor woman of Samaria, but for the whole Church, asking all to give Him to drink. The loss of His Blood draws from the depths of His Heart the same complaint which Samson made after the slaughter of the Philistines: What does it avail Me to have vanquished the spirits of darkness, and to have saved mankind by My Cross, if I die of thirst? Finally, the poison of our sins, for which He daily offers the sacrifice of His life, causes Him so violent a thirst, that He is constrained to seek for refreshment as earnestly as the hart seeketh the water-brooks. Nor is it strange that He who is the fountain of living water, quenching the thirst and satisfying the desires of all men, should Himself be so dry and parched. It is true that in this august mystery He is the source of life, and that no desires are so

vast, but He satisfies them with ease. But tell me, I beseech you, if fountains themselves could thirst, would it be that they might drink, or that others might drink of them; is it to be refreshed, or that they might refresh others? Judge from hence of the thirst of Jesus Christ. It is not a *thirst of love*, for His love towards us is boundless, but it is an extreme desire to be loved by us in return. The centre of His wishes and the place of His repose is the heart of man. His delight is to heal its wounds, cleanse its stains, to visit its recesses, to enlighten its darkness, and fulfil its desires. The property of this celestial bread is to give us a life which contains no bitterness, ease without languor, immortality without corruption. When He has so ardent a desire for our salvation, it is not wonderful that He is tormented with thirst, but what is surprising is that so few are found to present themselves to Him, and be made partakers of His benefits. If a church were on fire, crowds would assemble to extinguish the flames. And behold here is the temple of His adorable Humanity, burning with the fire of charity, and no man comes, or if any do approach the altar it is with such coldness, that one cannot help being amazed at such great insensibility. O my divine Saviour, how great is the ingratitude of men! When David was oppressed with thirst, four valiant soldiers of his army forced the camp of the enemy, to draw water from the well of Bethlehem: and yet no man makes any effort to quench Thy thirst, O King of all hearts. In ancient times Thou didst give to the Israelites, in spite of their murmurings and rebellion, a miraculous fountain which followed them in the wilderness. Thou didst send an angel to the child Ismael, to relieve his thirst when he was

reduced to the last extremity through the distress of his mother. Thou didst cause the water to spring for Samson out of the jaw-bone of an ass, which had been the instrument of his victory. Thou didst cause the streams to flow from the fountain of Siloe to refresh the prophet Isaiah; and the torrent of Carith for Elias, who had so ardent a zeal for Thy glory: and yet Thou dost Thyself suffer a devouring thirst, and canst not find one faithful soul to give Thee a glass of cold water. A hundred times Thou strikest our hearts by Thy secret and loving inspirations, but they are harder than the rock of Moses, and give forth no moisture. How hard are the hearts of men! How great is the love of God! How small a return for Thy love dost Thou find amongst men! On the Cross Thou didst complain of being forsaken by the Father; but what reproach wilt Thou make to Thy children, who leave Thee languishing for love upon our altars, without giving Thee one mark of their gratitude? O if they did but know what they neglected! If they did but know the gift of God, and who it is that says to them, "Give Me to drink," surely they would not then leave this pure fountain, to run after foul and muddy waters, which can never quench the thirst or satisfy the heart of man, which must always remain in wretchedness so long as it is empty of Thy love! 'This sad abandonment in which the Son of God is left, is the reason for my saying, that the poverty to which He is reduced in this Sacrament by the excess of His charity, is not only a poverty of pretence, of prodigality, and of desire, but it is also a poverty of disgrace, which is the last and the hardest of all, because it brings upon Him all the shame which indigence is accustomed to draw down.

## SECTION V.

*The poverty of Jesus Christ is a poverty of misfortune.*

MEN fly from poverty, because she never comes alone: but always has with her as inseparable companions, abandonment, contempt, contradiction, and servitude. Slavery follows her, because the poor man is in want of everything; he is obliged to have recourse to the wealthy, and pay him subjection in lieu of support, honour in lieu of gain, service in exchange for recompense. Poverty is exposed to contempt, because the poor man has neither credit nor power, to ensure him respect and consideration; and since none fear giving offence to those they despise, it is not strange that all his designs are crossed, and that he meets everywhere with contradiction. Lastly, since the greater part of mankind are guided in their friendship rather by interest than by virtue, it is no wonder that they abandon the poor man from whom they have nothing to hope. Now, I say, that the Son of God endures all these misfortunes in the adorable Sacrament. The voluntary servitude which He here embraces, is truly wonderful, because He delivers Himself into the hands of all who will receive Him; He gives Himself to the first who asks; He sends none away; He does service to all the world, even to the vilest of mankind. If a man be in prison, the priest offers the sacrifice for his consolation; if he is in the hospital, the priest carries thither the Son of God to comfort him; if he is sick upon his bed, the priest carries the Viaticum to him to be his guide to a happy eternity. St. Ambrose, contemplating Jesus Christ at the feet of His apostles, exclaimed in

astonishment: O Sovereign Majesty, how low dost Thou stoop? Thou dost wash the feet of Thine own servants, like a slave, and pourest upon them the dew of Thy grace. This was an extreme abasement, but He was then in His mortal and passible state. St. Thomas, ravished by His condescension towards the blessed, says that He serves each one of His saints, as if He were their servant, and the real servant was the God of God Himself. This is the extreme humility of God when glorified and triumphant: but it regards only the Saints. Whereas in the Holy Sacrament, says St. Chrysologus, the King of Glory subjects Himself to mortal men: the Holy of holies to sinners: He reigns in heaven and He serves on earth; He is worshipped by the angels, and He stoops at the feet of criminals. He is seated at the throne of His Father, and at the same time does the office of a servant at the table of His slaves. The contempt He endures is the more intolerable, because He is outraged in all the attributes of His glory. The misers despise the riches of His grace: and after having received their priceless treasure, sell it, like Judas, for some petty interest. Voluptuaries despise His holiness, and fear not to profane His sacred Body which is whiter than the lily, and purer than the rays of the sun. The great of the world receive Him, like the Jews, with pomp and ceremony, and after three days, banish Him from their hearts, that they may crucify Him. The revengeful despise His goodness, and having dyed their lips in the Blood of the Lamb, they are not ashamed to tear His members to pieces, and like savage lions to shed the blood of their brethren.

The contradiction which Jesus Christ suffers in this Sacrament is universal; and though He is



the Prince of Peace, all alike make war against Him. He is attacked by the Jews, who are offended by our mysteries; by heretics, who deny them; by libertines, who deride them; by the wicked, who blaspheme them; and by sinners who resist their charms. But the greatest disgrace of all, is that He sees Himself forsaken by all, and no one stops near Him, to receive His favours and caresses. I know that He always loved solitude, and sought after it in all the mysteries of His mortal life. But there are two places in which it is painful to Him—Paradise and the Altar—the throne of His greatness and the throne of His love: Heaven, because it is the abode of the blessed, and He desires the salvation of all men; the altar, because it is the elevation of the saints, and He desires the sanctification of all. This is the reason why He calls upon all men, bidding them to come near to Him; and nevertheless after He has prepared so magnificent a feast, at so vast a cost, after inviting them so affectionately, and incited them by so many promises—you see His complaints recorded in the Gospel—all men forsake Him. They hasten to and crowd the courts of the great, with as much impatience and ambition as if they could gain heaven from them: and when they are called upon to pay their court to the Son of God, although He makes all heaven descend upon our altars, and offers us His Own Blood, what coldness there is, what excuses, what empty pretexts for escaping from His presence.

Enter now into your own heart, and in order to derive benefit from this discourse, listen to what St. Bernard says on the subject of the poverty of the Apostles: Do you see this divine Saviour under the veil of the Sacrament? Here

is the mirror of true poverty: Examine what are the dispositions of your soul, do not act like men who take a passing glance into a looking-glass, and a moment afterwards forget the true appearance of their features. The poverty of the Saviour of souls is a poverty of shame; He carries the burden, and suffers its effects. Do you bear in this same spirit the loss of your goods, contradiction, contempt, and the general abandonment by creatures? Does your soul remain at rest, when some disgrace befalls you? Do you say within yourself, I am poor; I ought not to look for the esteem of men, or complain of their disdain, or desire their luxuries, or to be astonished even if the necessaries of life fail me; however low I may be brought down, I shall never be reduced as low as my Saviour, who should be my example? The poverty of the Son of God is a poverty of desire; He is poor because He desires ardently the salvation and perfection of men's souls, and finds so few that content Him. Do you feel your spiritual wretchedness in the same manner, and deplore the state of your soul? Do you burn like Him, with an ardent desire of God's glory and a passionate desire of your own salvation, and of the acquisition of those virtues which form the true riches of a Christian? The poverty of the Son of God is a prodigal poverty, because He gives all away, and withholds nothing. Are you liberal to the poor, and towards God? Do you make use of no reserve with regard to Him? Is your heart undivided? However small may be that thing which you make an exception of, it is an obstacle to a perfect union, which cannot exist along with any other attachment. Lastly, the poverty of the Son of God is a poverty of pretence; for if He is poor from His profuse liberality, He is also

poor through wisdom, from the greatness of His commands: not that He needs our goods, but because He would attract us by His example to the love of holy poverty, and dispose us to receive those spiritual blessings which He is preparing for us, by teaching us to despise the perishable riches of the world. Indeed, the best disposition which we can bring with us to the Sacrament, is an entire detachment from all earthly affections and temporal interests. Whoever is not content with having Jesus Christ only, does not merit to possess Him: whoever possesses Him entirely, finds in Him such fullness, that he quickly loses all taste for worldly riches; in possessing Jesus Christ he disdains all other things. That adorable chalice filled with the Blood which his loving Redeemer so lovingly poured forth, so intoxicates him, that he loses the memory of all things else. This chalice is also called the chalice of the New Testament, not only as being the Testament of the Son of God who gives it, but as being the Testament of the Christian who receives it. The Son of God has instituted it in the form of a Testament, because He gave it at the time of His death, and the Christian ought never to receive it but with the desire of dying spiritually to all which is not God. Now you know that in a Testament, persons leave all their goods in the hands of their heirs. Receive then, I implore you, this last reflection, and if you would profit by the Holy Communion, remember when you approach the Eucharistic table, to make your Testament in favour of Jesus Christ, and the poor who are His members; declare in the presence of the angels that He is your heir; say to Him from the bottom of your heart—Lord, now that I have received this celestial Bread, this

sacred Viaticum, I perceive that I must die; and shall I after this live a natural life, and return to the follies of the world, and seek after the vanities of the age? I must then make my Testament—but in favour of whom? O my Lord, Thou dost teach me by Thy example. Thou hast made me Thy heir, and given me a right to the crown of heaven. Thou hast given up all Thy goods, and givest up Thyself into my hands: is it not right that I should respond to this excess of love? This I will do, O Lord, and from this moment I surrender myself absolutely to Thee, by abandoning entirely, my honour, my riches, my claims, and my own person. Be Thou the master of all my goods, and since Thou desirest that I should retain the use of them during the course of this life, grant me this grace, that I use them with such fidelity and indifference, that I may desire and seek after Thee alone, both in time and in eternity. Amen.

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MEDITATION FOR THE SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF  
THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*To communicate well, we must approach the Holy Table  
with a firm faith.*

“Accedamus cum vero corde, in plenitudine fidei.”

“Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith.”

FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER the necessity of faith. This is the first virtue by which the soul approaches to God. It is altogether necessary to our reception of the bread of life, because it is only the eye of faith

which can recognise the Son of God under the veils which cover His divine Countenance. The senses do not perceive Him, the reason does not discover Him; but there wants a supernatural light to penetrate the clouds by which He is surrounded. For He dwells in the Sacrament in a different manner from that in which He dwells in the works of creation. He dwells in all creatures, as theologians speak, by His Essence which fills all things; by His power, which makes all things; and by His knowledge, to which all things are present: but under the species He exists by the real presence of His sacred Humanity united to His divine Person. In the universe He is concealed from our bodily eyes, which rest only on the outward and sensible surface of things; but He is seen by the eyes of the understanding, which perceive Him, as St. Paul says, in the mirror of the creation; but in the Sacrament He is hidden both from the ken of the senses and the understanding: hidden from the senses, which can take hold only on the appearances; hidden from the understanding, which cannot lift itself above the level of natural reason. The Divinity is hidden in the Humanity; the Humanity under the figure of bread. He is therefore doubly concealed, so that in order to find Him in this mystery, we must draw near with full assurance of faith, and a vivid consciousness of His presence. You ought to say in yourself, Yes, it is my Saviour, the Saviour of all men that I am to receive. It is my God, the God of the universe, the same who came out from the bosom of His Father, to converse visibly with sinners; it is my King, the King of kings; it is my Judge, the Judge of the living and the dead, who at the dreadful hour of death will pronounce on my

salvation, who now comes, at this gracious moment, to treat familiarly with me His servant. You ought to consider that this is a mystery of love, instituted by the Son of God to exercise the submission of your understanding, and that He may give you an opportunity of sacrificing to Him, what is so dear to man, your own sense and judgment. You ought to look upon the day of Communion as a day of secrets, which is a name given to it by the Eastern Church, a day on which Jesus Christ treats you as His friend, and confides to you His secret, that is to say, His sacred Body, hidden under the species of the Sacrament. It is true that our loving Redeemer is a great secret in every condition of His life, and that there are few who find Him out; but in no place is He more hidden than in this mystery, which is called by St. Thomas, a most holy secret, known only to the eyes of faith; because, he says, we find here so many things above the powers of reason, and it is faith alone which can give us the understanding of it. In truth, if the difficulty of comprehending things arises either from the dazzling nature of their excellency, or else from the obscurity of their littleness; where can we find these two qualities more combined than in the Holy Sacrament? Where does there exist anything which at the same time is greater and less, more base and more lofty, and consequently less cognizable to the senses? I know that St. Chrysostom teaches that He has made Himself visible under the species, and that it is useless to exclaim as so many do, O that I might have the happiness of seeing Him, or that I might touch but the hem of His garment! You do see Him, says the saint, you touch Him, and yet you say that you would be blessed in seeing only

His garment: you to whom He has given Himself, not that you may only see Him, but that you may touch and embrace Him at your ease. But we must not take these expressions in too literal and exact a sense. Strictly speaking, He is neither seen or touched by the senses: His Body in this Sacrament is placed beyond the reach of their weak faculties; if they see Him, it is only under the species, and, if I may use the expression, in a borrowed robe, under qualities which are not His own. We may truly touch Him, says St. Bernard, but it is with the heart, and not with the hand; with the soul, and not with the eyes; by faith, and not by the senses. Or, if you will, we may touch Him with the hands of faith, and the finger of love, and embrace Him with affectionate devotion; we may, in a word, touch Him with the eyes of the spirit. O Lord, I desire not to see Thee now with my bodily eyes, since for the exercise of my faith, Thou seest fit to conceal Thyself from me, and deprive me of so great a consolation: I renounce it from my heart, and count that it is so until that blessed day when Thou shalt raise my body from the dust, and clothe it with robes of glory. Then I shall see Thee with my eyes, and my glorified senses will enjoy the object of their beatitude in contemplating Thee. It is enough for me at this present time, that Thou art with me, and that I possess Thee whilst I see Thee not. What am I saying, that I see Thee not? Do I not hold Thee in my possession, O Thou dearest of all friends? Do I not see Thee, although Thou art concealed, if not with the same eyes, at least with the same heart and spirit, with which I hope to see Thee one day in the company of the Saints?

## SECOND POINT.

Consider the merit of faith. This virtue produces three effects in the heart of man, disposing it to partake with advantage of the divine mysteries. It gives him light, motion, and rest: light to contemplate the Son of God, motion to approach Him, rest to enjoy Him. Under these three heads the practice of faith may be included. First, you ought during the time of Communion, to hold the torch of faith burning in the midst of your soul, that you may contemplate without ceasing, not the feeble accidents which deceive the senses, but the Son of God, the King of glory, who hides the brightness of His face, more dazzling than a thousand suns, in order that you may have access to His mercy, and less fear of His greatness. Secondly, this sight ought to make the same impression on you, which the presence of Jesus Christ did on John the Baptist, whilst he was still within his mother's womb: it ought to make your heart tremble for joy, and cause you to be diligent in the practice of virtue, that you may give a worthy reception to the wonderful Guest who visits you: to give you hope that you may go before Him with joy; humility, that you may reverently abase yourself in His presence; charity, that you may lovingly embrace Him; religion, that you may do Him homage; obedience, that you may submit yourself wholly to His will in all things. Thirdly, this contemplation of God ought to make you collect all the powers of your soul, and force you to drive away all thoughts which might distract its intercourse with its divine Spouse; for He takes delight in silence and repose; and if He does not unveil Himself to the senses, he at least makes His Presence to be surely felt.



This exercise of faith is highly precious and meritorious, by reason of the great honour it does to Jesus Christ in subjecting to Him the noblest faculty of the soul, and opening to Him the door of the heart, which is the throne of His love, and the most delightful abode He has upon earth; in addition to which, it requires an heroic effort to subdue the understanding, and oblige it to believe what it does not see. This is a struggle like that of Jacob, who wrestled all night with the angel until the break of day, and with such happy consequences, that with the loss of one of his nerves, he gained the benediction of His conqueror. In like manner the just man, enlightened by faith, unites himself closely to his Saviour, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, and in this combat of love, the inferior human reason loses the nerve of its strength, but supreme reason becomes more luminous, and increases from brightness to brightness, until the light of a happy eternity begins to beam upon it. Moreover, this faith which submits us to Jesus Christ, and causes Him to reign in our hearts, does so only that it may crown us with blessings, and work in us the great effects of His love; so that it does not only discover to us by its light this hidden treasure, but under cover of the darkness it, as it were, steals it away and places it in our possession. This is the key which admits noble souls to the knowledge of God's marvels, and makes them enjoy the inestimable riches of His grace. If they are ravished by His goodness, it is faith which teaches them that God communicates Himself to His creatures, with a profusion worthy of His greatness. If in their secret and familiar converse with Him, they feel within them, in some sort, the foretaste of glory, faith is the means which communicates

this happiness, which directs and arranges the interview, and causes them to repose so sweetly beneath the shade of the fair tree of life, and to feed upon its delicious fruits. If their souls burn with love whilst they unite themselves so intimately with their chaste Spouse, it is faith which allows them to see that wonderful beauty of which they feel the attractions; and finally, if they esteem themselves able to do all things through their confidence in the strength of Jesus Christ, it is faith which makes known to them that this is done by the arm of the Eternal Father, to whom nothing is difficult, except that which He desires not to accomplish.

If this be true, judge with what fervour you ought to seek after this virtue, in order that you may be capable of experiencing such excellent effects. Alas! what a subject of confusion it is to me that I am so weak in the faith; what graces I have lost by my neglect of it. Alas! if I believed with a living faith that it is the bread of angels which is offered to me, that it is my Redeemer, the same who dwells in the bosom of God the Father before the foundation of the world, who entered into the womb of a virgin mother for the salvation of the world, who will come again to judge the world—if, I say, I was intimately convinced of these truths, should I dare to approach Him as I do, without preparation, without sorrow or repentance, without tears or reverence? Should I venture, after receiving Him, to employ on objects of vain curiosity those eyes which have seen this adorable mystery, or that tongue in words of raillery, slander, or licentiousness, upon which He has reposed? Should I dare to profane the heart into which He has entered, by disorderly affections, hatred, envy, or revenge? How is it that I fall so easily

into such faults, and derive so little fruit from my communions, if it be not that I come there with a weak, languishing, sickly faith, because I have not firmly grounded myself in this virtue? When shall I repair my great losses? When shall I open my eyes that I may be able to see, on the one side, something of the extreme poverty which oppresses me, and on the other, the immense riches which are here offered to me? O Lord my God, without Thee I can do nothing, I am blind and my understanding is darkened; have pity upon me, and grant me sight, that I may see Thy greatness, and adore Thee with all the powers of my soul.

### THIRD POINT.

Consider the reward of faith. The reward promised to this virtue when it shall have arrived at the fountain of light, wonderfully corresponds to the merit it acquires amidst the darkness here below. It does not agree either with the mercy or justice of God, says a learned father, that He should exclude from His kingdom those whom He has united so closely to His own person, during the period of their exile; but it is right that in heaven where He unveils His incomprehensible majesty, He should render particular honour to those who have been remarkable for honouring Him under the veils and figures of the Sacrament. From these excellent words three things may be gathered: first, that the right use of the communion is, as it were, an anticipation and certain pledge of bliss; secondly, that those who have an exalted faith, and strong impression of the presence of Jesus Christ in this mystery, will have a particular reward and crown in heaven; thirdly, that this crown is

probably nothing else than a more clear and loving perception of His sacred humanity. This conjecture is founded upon the connection existing between the merit and the reward, because as the possession of the Saints corresponds to their hopes, and their joy to the measure of their desires, so this clear sight of Jesus corresponds to the merit of their faith; now where else can our faith in the humanity of the Son of God, be more noble and generous than it is in the Sacrament of His love? We may therefore believe, that they who exercise their faith most perfectly in this mystery, will see with greater clearness what they have believed with greater fulness, and that Jesus Christ having been in an especial manner the object of their faith, will be especially the food of their beatitude; that He will appear to them more beautiful and lovely, and by the sight of His perfections, He will satiate their hearts with joys unspeakable. Hence it follows, that if in the Sacrament He withdraws Himself from the perception of our senses, He does so in mercy, to the end that faith being obliged to combat and to overcome the resistance of natural reason, may grow stronger by this exercise of its powers, may by this means attain to its perfection, and in the end receive its crown.

Whenever, therefore, we go to the table of angels to feed on the bread of heaven, let us take care to have a lively faith, so that we may worthily receive the Son of God according to His merits. Should it ever happen that our senses rise up in rebellion, let us quickly beat down their pride and temerity; let us remember that faith has two qualities, absence of proof, and sure conviction; the first, because Jesus Christ, who is the object of our faith, is hidden in this mystery, the second, because He is truly

there contained. You will not see Him, because He does not show Himself, but you will find Him, because He makes Himself present to you by the sweet influence of His spirit. What is it to you whether you see Him or not, provided you are certain that you possess Him? Draw near to Him, O Christian soul, with a firm faith, receive Him by the real eating of His Flesh and of His Blood, take hold of Him by your love, retain Him by your purity, and never lose Him by your lightness and inconstancy. Believe in this primary truth and acquiesce in His word, and love this tender friend who desires to be Himself the crown of your obedience and the reward of your faith.

O Lord, I thank Thee for having procured for me so favourable an opportunity of proving my fidelity! How gracious Thou art for having prepared so beautiful a crown for those who combat their human reason, and triumph over the wisdom of the flesh, by the force of Thy word alone. What a happiness to my soul to know, that Thou art at once the subject and the witness of this combat; I believe it firmly, O my Saviour, because Thou hast commanded me to believe; Thou hast assured me of it, Thou who art Thyself the truth. I believe, and that I might please Thee more, I would that I had the light of those great saints, who contemplate Thee with an eye so firm, a view so enlightened, so penetrating, so far beyond the perceptions of sense, that for them faith seems to be no longer veiled.

DISCOURSE FOR THE MONDAY IN THE OCTAVE  
OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*The Holy Sacrament is the throne of mercy ; the Son of God calls to it all who are in affliction, to console and comfort them in their miseries.*

“ Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.”

“ Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”—Matt. xi. 28.

There is no person in the world who is not in need of consolation, because there is none who has not something to suffer. The earth is a great battle-field, in which misery pursues us from the moment of our birth, and obliges us whilst we fly to seek for protection. Thence it is that the heart of man is always trying to escape from the evils which attack it on every side ; but it finds no place of refuge here below : heaven is not open to it until after death, and thus it would have always remained without succour and defence, if the Son of God had not established a refuge in the holy Sacrament, which the early Christians, as we are told by St. Gregory of Tours, used to keep in a little gold or silver tower, surrounded with eagles and lions, teaching us by this, that the altar is a fortress impregnable by sorrow, and that the bread we there receive gives us eagles' wings to fly away from the miseries of life, and a lion's heart to overcome them. It is to this asylum that Jesus Christ upon this day invites all who

are in affliction, speaking to them words of love: “Come unto Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”

## SECTION I.

*The Son of God has instituted the Holy Sacrament as the throne of His mercy in all places of the world, that He may give access to all that are miserable.*

The holy Sacrament is, strictly speaking, the throne of God's mercy, and the common refuge of the afflicted, who find in it a comfort and a remedy for all their ills. Why do you suppose He made His dwelling amongst men, and why is He found miraculously, and as it were immeasurably, present in all parts of the world whenever the holy Sacrifice is offered? I discover four principal reasons for this—first, it is to sanctify the earth, which is all stained with the foulness of our crimes, in order that His Father may in all places be supremely honoured, as He is in every place offended. Palestine is too narrow to contain My glorious Name; I will spread abroad its glory from the East to the West; I will that in all places of the world a pure and innocent Victim be offered to Me, that henceforward the whole earth be one holy Jerusalem, one Bethlehem, one house of bread, one sacred temple, one Jacob's ladder, upon which the angels might ascend and descend: so that it may be said of every place on earth, “This is the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven, in which it is His will to be adored.” The second reason is, that He may take possession of His empire, and regain the hearts of all, and repair the ruinous condition of His dominions, by gathering His flock together, and by leading

back His sheep into one fold, as a good Shepherd of the sheep. I have predestined Thee to set in order My people, and build up the waste places of My kingdom, to take possession of the whole earth, which I have given to Thee as a ruined and wasted inheritance, that Thou mayst establish it anew, by giving freedom to the sinners, and delivering them from the bondage of the devil and the powers of darkness. The third reason is, that He may give to all the most sensible tokens of His love. For if He is a King, certainly He is King of love, and it is the property of love to captivate the object beloved by attraction and by attachment. Jesus Christ, therefore, being, as Solomon says, the great lover of souls, it is no wonder that he every where pursues and searches after them—as their shepherd shall I say, or as their servant? as a slave follows his master, shall I say, or as a master seeks after his slave? It signifies little to a love so exceeding what quality it assumes, provided that it be able to satisfy itself, and be present with the object of its affection. The fourth reason is, that He may give to all men an easy access to His mercy, and provide in every place an open refuge into which they may escape under the miseries of life. On this account it is that He has seen fit to give to His Body, which is the throne of His clemency, a kind of immeasurable greatness, in order that it may be present with us in all our needs, and lovingly console us under all the disgraces which may come upon us.



## SECTION II.

*It belongs to Jesus Christ alone to discharge the office of a perfect Comforter.*

In order to enter into this sweet consideration I must presuppose, that it belongs to God alone to banish sadness and sorrow from the heart of man, and to discharge the office of a perfect Comforter. It is generally said, that there are three medicines for the cure of sorrow, viz. God, reason, and time.

Time is the commonest medicine of our ills, but it is too slow; and its lingering operation often makes us buy the remedy by a delay more wearisome even than the sorrow.

Reason would be capable of curing us, if we would call in its succour; but there are griefs so obstinate that they will not listen to its voice, and bitter tears which will not suffer the touch of a hand which might gently wipe them away. There needs, then, something stronger than a human hand to vanquish this resistance; and if the ancients were accustomed to call physicians who healed bodily sickness, "the hands of God," with much more reason may it be said, that God's hand alone can heal the wounds of the soul.

In truth, if opposites are cured only by their opposites, it is necessary to bring joy into a heart which is attacked with sorrow. Now, it is God alone Who can pour instantaneously into the soul this heavenly dew. Created things can only gain an entrance by means of the senses, and sorrow is in the habit of shutting up all these avenues of approach.

Moreover, in order to heal a man's heart, his

mind must first of all be cured, for this is always discovered before the heart; for whatever unhappiness may come upon us, no man can be miserable who does not believe himself to be so: and yet for a man to believe that any worldly misfortune can make him miserable, is an error of judgment, and a malady of the mind. On this account we see that all the sages of antiquity were unable to find any better remedies against sadness than those which tend to undeceive and correct the thoughts of the mind.

Some consider that if we would banish the feeling of our ills, we must banish the recollection of them, and disengage the mind from them. Others say that we must persuade ourselves that the evil which afflicts us is not a real evil; or that it is uncertain whether or no it be so, or that if it be a real evil, it is not so great as we think it, and it only is so in virtue of our own opinion. These would be excellent recommendations, if they were not so difficult to follow; but experience shows that these false opinions, which make up so great a part of our evils, are chronic maladies, and their case is of very rare occurrence, except by the special favour of heaven; and if it be true that all the evils of this present life are nothing but vain shadows, still the greatest human wisdom is not capable of dispersing them, unless it be strengthened with a divine light. Add to this, that the best means of consoling an afflicted person is to remove the evil which threatens or oppresses him, or to take a part of it on oneself, or to take away his feeling of the evil, or at least to give him strength to bear it. Now this belongs to God alone, Whose wisdom can foresee all misfortunes, Whose power can drive them away, Whose goodness can bear them, Whose grace

can soften their rigour, and augment our patience. All this He does for us in the Divine Sacrament, which is the throne of His mercy. Here it is that He removes the dangers which we fear, repairs our losses, pities our wretchedness, and mingles with them sweetness and joy, that we may have strength to overcome them, and to make them occasions of merit.

## SECTION III.

*The Holy Sacrament is our safeguard and preservation against the evils which threaten us.*

In the first place, as St. Gaudentius says, the holy Sacrament is a divine defence which places us under cover from misfortune, and by the presence of Jesus Christ dissipates all those fears which may trouble our peace of mind. For if the weakest weapons become all-powerful in the hand of God, who would not be in safety when he had Jesus Christ at his side, removing far away all that may hurt him, and making a rampart for him with His own Body? In former times God saw fit to manifest His providence by conducting men by means of extraordinary prodigies, and gave them lions for their defenders, who have saved the lives of martyrs in the amphitheatres, served anchorites in the deserts, defended the honour of virgins even in places of infamy, have buried the dead bodies of saints, digging their graves after their decease. But all those marvellous favours do not approach to that which the Son of God does to us in the holy Sacrament, where the Lion of the tribe of Judah is Himself our defender and faithful guardian, chasing away before Him all the evils which threaten us.

Procopius says that David took the name of a lion, and bore this figure engraved upon his seal and upon his arms, and that in virtue of the benediction which Jacob gave to the tribe of Judah, which he called a lion, he had victory always at his command, and triumphed over all the hazards of war. If the shadow of the lion of the tribe of Judah was a source of such strength to him, what may not be hoped by the faithful who possess His true Body? What protection can they desire more honourable than that of the Son of God, who loses nothing of His power and might by being hidden under the weak accidents of bread and wine?

He it is Who protects kingdoms, Who establishes crowns, Who guards princes in their battles, and upon Whom princes call for help in their difficulties.

He it is Who protects the Church militant; and if the bark of St. Peter exists still after more than eighteen centuries amidst the ceaseless tossing of the waves, it is because the Son of God is present in it. The holy Sacrament, where He reposes, is the anchor that holds it, so that, although it be always beaten by the tempest, it is never shipwrecked.

It is He Who causes the world still to subsist in the midst of so many crimes which would have been sufficient to reduce it again to nothing, if His Almighty hand had not held it up, lest it should fall into ruins. It is said that the wife of King Croesus having brought forth a lion, the oracle, being consulted upon the prodigy, answered, that it must be put to death, and carried in pomp round the walls of the city of Sardis, because this would serve the city as a rampart, and make its duration eternal.

This is a mere fable: but, in very truth, that

Lion of Judah Whom the Jews put to death upon Calvary, and Whom we triumphantly carry in our solemn and public processions, is the safeguard of the world, which, by the testimony of Scripture, will never come to an end till the time when Antichrist shall put down the sacrifice of the altar, which the prophet Daniel calls "the perpetual sacrifice."

Finally, He it is Who protects the predestinated, and hides them in His wounds; He it is Who saves them from shipwreck; witness the brother of St. Ambrose; He who preserves them from sickness, as the manna which prefigured the Sacrament supported the Israelites in unfailing health; He Who preserves them from death, and heaps thousands of blessings upon them, the effects of which are felt at every moment: but the cause of which they will not know perfectly till they enter into life eternal.

#### SECTION IV.

*The Holy Sacrament repairs all our losses.*

If the holy Sacrament does not repel all the miseries which assault us, and ward off all the shafts of calamity—if, by some secret judgment, it sometimes permits that we be cruelly wounded, we have at least this consolation, that it is able to heal all our wounds, and indemnify us for any evil we have suffered. Indeed, if sadness be a painful feeling, arising from the privation of some good thing which misfortune has taken from us, the inestimable blessing of possessing God, who gives Himself to us in the Sacrament, ought to banish all our displeasure, because He more than makes up for all our loss. If misfortune were to make you the most wretch-

ed of men, it could take nothing from you which Jesus Christ does not restore with usury, when He imparts Himself to you in loving exchange as a recompense. Suppose you are stripped of all your goods: you are still too rich, if the holy Sacrament is your treasure. You cannot be poor when this rich possession belongs to you; and you will never regret what you have lost, if you know how to value what you have gained. Supposing your pleasures all disturbed, and mingled with gall and wormwood, still misfortune can but poison the streams, whilst the fountain of joy remains always fresh and pure. Suppose your reputation attacked: the judgment of God is better than that of men; and he who possesses within his own soul the Sun of Glory and the Light of Heaven itself, ought not to tremble at the shadows of earth. Finally, whatever disgrace befalls you, you may forget all the evils you suffer by remembering only the benefit you enjoy. You are wrong to complain of fortune whilst she preserves to you the good graces of your Master. Whilst your soul is in health you can lose nothing, and ought to despise the rest. It is not enough that you dry your tears, let joy appear in your eyes. In Him you have all things. He is to you in the place of all. You do not know your happiness, if you suffer your heart to regret the loss of any other good, so long as this remains to you. If the favour of a mortal prince is so soothing to man that it banishes disappointment from the mind, and prevents the entrance of sorrow, think what the presence of God ought to accomplish, and see if He has not reason to blame our impatience when He enters within us, and to make us this loving reproach: "I am here in your hands, I am yours: what is it you complain of?"

You have lost a friend, am not I better than a friend? You have lost your goods, am not I your sovereign Good? Know you not that all the good things of the world are perishable, and that I alone am enduring?"

In truth, unless we had Jesus Christ with us, and if He did not dwell upon our altars, we should with good reason be inconsolably afflicted; for if we had no friends, every consolation would be a weariness, amusements would be sorrow, the earth a place of exile, and life a torment worse than death. O divine Saviour of our souls, if Thou wast not in the world, I might well shut my heart to all the consolations of earth; I might say to the sun: O beautiful light, withdraw thy rays, and hide the splendour of thy face, because light is to me only darkness in the absence of my Saviour. I confess that I could not live: life would be to me a death, and consolation a torment. I should languish in weakness, and not have courage to do any good work. But now that I see and possess Him, now that I can speak to Him at every hour, and pour out my cares into His bosom, how can I be sad with such a Friend and Comforter, Who gives me abundantly all the riches of His grace, and takes a part in all my sorrows?

## SECTION V.

*The Son of God dwells in the Holy Sacrament to compassionate our miseries.*

It is a great consolation to have a friend who weeps with us, and who feels pity for us under the afflictions we endure, and this because weeping for the miseries of a friend is a testimony we render to his innocence and a mark of friendship,

which is accustomed to make all things common between friends. Now friendship is always grateful to us, but especially amidst the storms of misfortune ; for it seems as if a kind friend by sharing our troubles, helps us to carry them and makes the burden lighter. In proportion as the clouds discharge themselves, and pour down showers on the face of the earth, the storm is dissipated and the heaven regains its serenity. In the same manner when we pour out our tears on the bosom of a friend, our poor heart discharges itself and feels a sensible diminution of its burden. Then if it is a consolation to the wretched not to be alone, but to have others like themselves, certainly this kind of consolation can never exist in a greater degree, or be more solid, than when it is love which gives us companions in our suffering. This is what love has wonderfully accomplished in the person of our Lord ; for to console us under our afflictions, His charity has placed Him under the species of the Sacrament, in a state in which it may be said that He assembles all our miseries, and takes all the share of them that the qualities of a glorious body allow Him to suffer. If poverty is your affliction, what deprivation can be greater than that of Jesus Christ, who has nothing for His raiment except the whiteness of the host, and for His throne but a little speck ? If you are in slavery and dependance, He has so subjected Himself to the will of the priest, that without any regard to his good or bad qualities, He punctually obeys his word, if I may use the expression, and immediately makes Himself present under the accidents of bread, to which He remains so closely united, that He may be freely disposed of and carried about everywhere without resistance. If you are in dishonour, what humiliation does not



He endure under this state? He is abandoned in villages, dishonoured in towns, profaned by the wicked, and even by His friends often treated with great irreverence. If you are sick, and the violence of pain causes you to groan, He does not in truth endure this, but He here renews all the signs of His sufferings. His Side is open, His Hands are pierced, His Blood is shed, His Body mystically separated from His Blood by the words of consecration. Why is the King of glory in this condition? Ye poor, it is in pity for your indigence; ye sick, it is in pity for your pains; ye bereaved souls, it is in pity for your sorrows; to be a companion to you in your solitude, and to tell you that if He could again suffer and die for you, He would willingly do it to deliver you from your miseries. In this mystery He presents to you the image of His cross, that the memory of His passion may encourage you to suffer the afflictions which He sends you, and to take away from you, by an increase of love, all subject for complaint against His goodness; from those two wounds in His hands which He shows you, He causes to issue two inexhaustible fountains of consolation; the one of sweetness, the other of strength; the one to banish sadness from your heart, the other to take away your impatience of pain.

## SECTION VI.

*The Son of God in the Holy Sacrament, causes to flow from His wounds two fountains of solid consolation, the one of sweetness, the other of strength.*

As to this sweetness, you know that the holy Sacrament contains its source, and that spiritual joy must there be drawn. The sweet Jesus

changes all things into sweetness ; whoever tastes finds in Him nothing bitter or painful. If your heart should be dry as the rock, a touch from this divine Lamb would make a fountain of living water to gush forth. If it should be barren as the wilderness, this heavenly manna would make it a garden of delights. If it should be hot as the furnace of Babylon, and the flames of grief rose to the height of fifty cubits, if the Son of God were to descend into it, the most scorching flames would be to you more refreshing than the dew. Finally, should you be in an abyss of sorrow, this divine Saviour, by touching your heart, would make it burst forth into thanksgivings and blessings, as Jonas made the praises of God to resound in the belly of the whale. One single ray of His grace, one inward word, one shaft of His love would suffice to soothe your pains, to change your murmurings into canticles of praise. Then being penetrated with the sweetness of His spirit, you will exclaim with awe: Blessed be the name of the Lord ! O my sweet Saviour, since Thou desirest that I should suffer, it is my will also, and I consent to it with my whole heart. It is too great an honour for me that I should bear on me the marks of Thy wounds ; and whatever I lose, I am still too happy if I possess Thee. O how sweet are the tears I shed when they are wiped away by Thy hand ! O how lovely does death itself appear to him who expires in the arms of life ! I acknowledge that He does not always render His presence sensible by the sweetness of heavenly consolation, but He always inspires strength, and if He at times withdraw happiness from us, He never refuses patience. Who does not know that strength is preferable to sweetness ? To give strength to bear suffering, is not certainly the

same thing as taking away the feeling of pain, but it takes away the evil of it, which is a thing more to be desired. In truth, sorrow is not an evil in itself, for it may sometimes be good and praiseworthy. But what is the evil of sorrow? That impatience and murmuring which spring from human infirmity, and for which there is no better remedy than the strength derived from the divine Eucharist. I am like a city well fortified, I am like a besieged city, fortified by Jesus Christ, and besieged by the devil. But I do not fear his attacks because I have a powerful protector, and if I am sharply assaulted, I am still more strongly defended. Satan is the chief of my enemies; but Jesus Christ is the Master of the fortress, and I am consoled because my enemies are without, and my protector within. Those importunate maladies so violent and so wearisome are without. The calumnies and atrocious slanders which attack my honour and reputation, are without. Those losses of fortune or of friends, those abandonments, betrayals, and cruel persecutions, are without. But within me I have God Himself, animating me by His presence, sustaining me by His power, covering me by His protection. What ought I to fear, if I only avail myself of His succour? O my dear Defender, I have Thee only either to lose or to gain. If I lose Thee, I am most miserable; if I hold possession of Thee, I am happy. Do Thou then be always with me, and do not permit me ever to separate myself from Thee.

MEDITATION FOR THE MONDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF  
THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*The Son of God gives Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament  
dying, to teach us that we must die to ourselves.*

FIRST PRELUDE.

Prostrate in spirit before the Holy Sacrament, represent to yourself Jesus Christ on the throne of His love, as your divine Master teaching you by His example what you ought to be, and what perhaps you are not, that is to say, a perfectly mortified man.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Ask of the Son of God a spark of His love, to renew in you, by a conformity to His death, that spirit of mortification which is so necessary to profit well by your Communion.

FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER that the condition of the Son of God in the Holy Sacrament, is one which figures His death, by which He saved the whole race of man, and that He enters in Person into this condition, bearing with Him the merits and treasures of His Cross, by a wonderful change in a vile substance, which is destroyed entirely in giving place to His Body, which Body is of infinite value, and contains in Itself all the riches of heaven, in order to communicate them

to us. In like manner, if you desire that the Spirit of Jesus should fill you with its virtue, to continue in you that office of the Saviour of souls which He fulfilled in dying on the Cross, He must enter into you by a perfect change, which destroys all that is vicious and corrupted in your nature, and makes room for the operations of His grace. The reason is, that so long as you are actuated by the movements of nature and your own intentions and inclinations, whatever you may do, you will only lose yourself, and you will never save a single soul. For salvation is not the work of nature, but of Jesus Christ, who will never fill you with His divine Spirit, if you do not put self-love to death. Hold it therefore as certain, that so long as you are full of yourself, you will be empty of God; that you must lose yourself in order to gain Jesus, and find in Him your own perfection and that of many others. Renew in your soul this efficacious desire and firm will to change the imperfect life you are now leading. Alas! what do you lose, in losing this life, but a false liberty and real misery? Ought a thing of nothing to occupy you instead of God? Cannot the love of Jesus do in you what fire does in brute matter, which it strips entirely of its gross qualities, to convert it into flames? If you desire it, you might be a burning fire to kindle the hearts of all men, and you are only a mass of ice.

#### SECOND POINT.

Consider that Jesus Christ is in the Holy Sacrament in a mode in which a body can only live by miracle. For He is reduced to a mere point, after the manner of spirits; whence it follows that by reason of this condition, and under

the veils which conceal Him, He cannot exercise any functions of the senses, or of those faculties which depend on His organic powers, except only by virtue of a force superior to nature; so that He makes no use at all of His sight, or of any other sense; or, if He does so, it is by miracle. Such also ought a truly mortified man to be. He ought to make the exercise of his body and senses altogether spiritual, stifling the natural motions of the mind, which are so hard to mortify, so that he may neither see, speak, or converse with his neighbour, or take his rest, his food, or his necessary amusement, except by the movement of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And in the same way that death, when it seizes upon a body, kills the whole of it at once, and quenches in it every spark of life, because life is an indivisible essence; so must mortification, which is the death of self-love, be also universal, and leave in us nothing which lives the natural life. Examine your life a little by this rule: look at yourself in this mirror, and see if Jesus Christ alone lives in your thoughts, your affections, your looks, your deportment, and your words. O how much of nature is still living within you! how sensible you are to honour! how careful in seeking your own ease and advantage! how hostile you are to rule and to good counsel, how fond of pleasure and of your own will! O how much work is to be done in these days of devotion, if you would do your duty rightly, instead of superficially and perfunctorily! What shame for you to have gained so little over yourself; nay, that you have even fallen backwards!

## THIRD POINT.

Consider that although Jesus Christ died once upon Calvary, He still daily renews His death a million times on the altar. Thus Rupertus calls this adorable mystery the funeral of Jesus Christ, which the Church daily celebrates, and without which she could not subsist. Strictly speaking, she occupies only eight days in the year in celebrating the mystical death of the Son of God, in which she obliges you to renew that fervour of mind which puts to death the natural man; still she requires that you seek continually to mortify yourself in all things, and though she does not always observe so much pomp at this funeral of self, she requires not less of courage and resolution. In the course of nature the dead never revive, but the old man and that corrupt nature which taints your whole being, frequently springs again into life, after you have caused it to die. It is not therefore enough that you bury it to-day, because if you have not the sword of mortification always in your hand, you will quickly see it revive. It will do away with that modesty of behaviour and self-recollection which you practice to-day; it will trouble your devotions, and, if possible, make you forsake them; it will cause you to be indifferent to your destined employments, and make you adopt maxims of false wisdom, and prefer them to the wisdom of Jesus Christ. Take good heed and resist the attack, let each day of your life be a day of death, and all your actions those of a man truly mortified. Be persuaded that on this depends all your own good, and even that of the Church itself, which could not subsist without this spirit.

DISCOURSE FOR THE TUESDAY IN THE OCTAVE  
OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*Of the spiritual joy which our Lord gives us in the  
Holy Sacrament.*

"Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos."

"Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—Matt. xi. 28.

ST. THOMAS makes a remarkable observation, in his answer to the objections of certain persons who complained—"I often make my preparation with all possible care, I communicate, and receive the Body of our Lord, and yet I feel no sweetness." Our Lord, he says, in giving His Body to His faithful servants, always gives some sweetness; but He gives in one manner to this person, in another to that person, as He judges to be most convenient for them. Hence it is that some taste this sweetness by the affection of love, and draw their consolation from a more warm devotion; others taste the same sweetness by the faculty of reason, and derive their satisfaction from the profit they receive, believing that they obtain true life by means of this sacred nourishment. This distinction of the Angelic doctor will form the subject of this discourse, wherein we shall see that our Lord Jesus Christ makes us taste the spiritual delights and sweetness of the Holy Sacrament in three different manners: first, by a reasonable perception of the blessings and advantages which



thence accrue to us ; secondly, by a devotional feeling which is at the same time tender and solid ; thirdly, by a deep sentiment of an inward and real union of the soul and body with the Son of God. This last is peculiar to those who are far advanced in the way of perfection.

## SECTION I.

I say then, in the first place, that although a faithful man do not experience any sensible consolation in receiving the Holy Sacrament, yet the knowledge of the advantage he derives is itself a great sweetness, and that he ought to be infinitely satisfied in knowing that Jesus Christ gives Himself to him, since in possessing Him, he has the sovereign good, and supreme contentment of a reasonable spirit. For as St. Bernardine of Sienna says, what treasure can one imagine more precious than the sacred Body of Jesus Christ? When He comes to honour us with His visit, says Father Balthazar Alvarez, He does not leave His treasures in heaven, which is His ordinary abode ; He does not leave behind the looks of mercy, the feelings of love, the heavenly ambrosia, the graces, the favours, the spiritual riches which He distributes with such magnificence. In fine, He does not come with His hands empty, but full of all good things ; so that it may be said that whoever possesses Him has nothing left to wish for, for he has all things. The shortest method of possessing all things, is to search after and desire Him alone, and never to leave off the pursuit till you are satisfied. But if He come to you alone, without any sensible consolation, is not that enough to content you? Is this too little for you? Is He not greater than your

heart? Certainly, he who is not content with the principal, does not merit any accessory joy. You imagine that your communions are unprofitable because you experience no sensible sweetness. This is to be in great darkness and ignorance of divine things: do you not know that this sensible taste of consolation which you regret is one of the most inconsiderable fruits of communion? Are you ignorant that God sometimes withdraws it from His greatest friends, in order that He may teach them to think more of Him than of His gifts? And is it not perhaps on this very account that He deprives you of it, because you seek for it with too great avidity, as if you prized it higher than Him? And if you say that you desire it only that you may be more pleasing to Him, is it not a great folly to endeavour to please God, by asking for that which He is pleased to deny you? Would it not be far better to abandon yourself to His holy Will, and rest content with what He orders for you? St. Catharine of Genoa, one day, feeling her heart drowned in a sea of sweetness and consolation after the holy Communion, said to our Lord: O Lord, wouldest Thou by this favour oblige me to love Thee? No, no, Lord, do not act thus towards me, if it seem good to Thee. Thou knowest that from the beginning of my conversion I have asked this grace from Thee, that Thou wouldest give me no vision, or sensible consolation. If you have not the courage to make a like request, at least submit yourself to the good pleasure of God, and be content that He deal with you according as He sees best. O the happiness of being content with God, without seeking from Him any consolation or sweetness! O if you did but know what God does for you in giving you Himself,

even when He leaves you without sensible devotion! O could you but penetrate, after partaking of the divine mysteries, into the sense of our Lord's words to the Apostles on the day of the last Supper, "Do you know what I have done for you?" you would then be better satisfied to be without sensible satisfaction, than to have all the consolations and sweetness and contentment in the world. Do you well understand what the Son of God does for you? He gives you His Body for food and His Blood for drink, His Soul for your ransom and His Divinity for your consolation, His Grace for your life and His Paradise for your heritage. Is this not enough to content you? He strengthens your mind, feeds your love, supports your good will, plants virtues in your soul, and establishes your perseverance. Have you not reason to be satisfied? He purifies your heart, mortifies your senses, quenches your passions, weakens your desires, blunts the darts of temptation, binds the power of your invisible enemies, and turns aside all the dangers that threaten you. What sweetness can be preferred to this excess of goodness towards you? Who can satisfy you, if you are discontented with so many benefits? Who can content you, if you are not content with having God alone? Thus it is that the Son of God always brings sweetness with Him into the reasonable part of the soul, even whilst He at the same time conceals it from His faithful servants.

## SECTION II.

But His goodness does not stop here. It extends to the affections, and then, as St. Laurent Justinian says, there is no heart so hard,

even though it were like steel or the diamond, which does not melt into joy and tender devotion, in seeing itself corporally united to its God. The mind cannot comprehend this sweetness, or the tongue explain it, no human senses can enter into so profound a mystery. O what delights are tasted by him who receives it! what ardour, what sweet conversings, what burnings of love, what chaste embracings! Who can discover the secret? There are only found canticles of inward joy, and vows and deep drawn sighs, and thanksgivings and praise, and the loving tears and groans of a heart all engrossed with the greatness and goodness of its well beloved. The devout soul, ravished with the presence of its Spouse, is replenished with joy by this adorable Sacrament, and filled with marvellous contentment, it is lost in its own nothingness, it is surrounded with light, and enjoys a deep repose, it is fortified by faith, penetrated with sentiments of true devotion, and united to its Saviour by bonds of indissoluble love: a love full of sweetness, rendering it more fervent in charity, more strong to labour, more ready to the practice of good works, more prudent under temptation, more careful in the study of virtue, more diligent in the discharge of its duties, more desirous of frequenting the divine mysteries. If the effects produced by the sweetness of the holy Sacrament are marvellous, the progressive increase of this sweetness is not less so. For, as Richard of St. Victor says, there are degrees in the influence of this spiritual joy: avidity, satiety, intoxication, security, and tranquillity. Avidity is the first degree of its progress, because the desire of any good thing which we love is always pleasing, but there is this difference between the desire of

spiritual and of sensual good things, that the desire of the latter precedes the enjoyment, and is immediately followed by disgust; but the former are generally not desired until after their sweetness is tasted. Hence arises that hunger after the holy Sacrament which is so wonderful in the Saints, in whom the taste of this divine food, and the delight which they feel, leave a marvellous avidity, and cause so lively, so urgent, so burning a desire of its participation, that any delay makes them languish with love. This is what wisdom herself says: "Those who eat me shall yet be hungry," because the more they taste the sweetness, the more they desire it. Now as tasting produces hunger, so hunger increases the taste, and makes it so perfect that it becomes satiety, a satiety not incompatible with spiritual hunger, because it extinguishes only the desire of earthly and perishable goods. For this reason St. Cyprian compares this heavenly bread to the manna, which had every sort of taste according to the desire of him who eat. In like manner the Holy Sacrament contains in itself every kind of delight, and by a marvellous virtue it answers to the desire of those who receive it with good dispositions. It has the taste of humility, of compunction, of mercy, of charity, of patience, and of every other virtue, according as they are sought for; and thus it contents and satisfies, and fulfils the desires with a sweetness that infinitely surpasses any earthly pleasure.

The great Avila, whose life is written by Grenada, made answer to one who was regretting that the Holy Land was not in the hands of the Christian kings, and was desiring that he might die on the same spot on which the Son of God gave His life for us. — "Well, have we not the

Holy Sacrament in our hands, the very remembrance of which fills me with disgust for all things else in the world?"

The Blessed Berchmans, touched with the same feeling, said affectionately to our Lord, "O my dear Master, what is there after the divine Communion which can give me sweetness and contentment?" This disgust for earthly pleasures shows the excess of delight which the Son of God gives birth to in the hearts of those who receive Him. This pleasure must be great if it renders all others insipid; but it seems to me that the delight must be higher still, when, by a sort of spiritual intoxication, it renders us insensible to all the afflictions of life, so that neither injuries, contempt, contradictions, nor bereavement in any way touch us: an effect which is produced by the full and superabundant sweetness of communion, in which all that is most contrary to nature loses its bitterness. By means of this there is engendered in the mind a certain confidence in the goodness of God which experience has made known to us, and a calm repose which may be said to be a foretaste of Paradise.

This delightful feeling is produced by two things; by the sight and by the love of Jesus Christ; by the sight of His perfections, and by the love of His goodness. Here is the source of light and heat in which are fulfilled the words of Scripture: "He shall see the Face of the Lord and his heart shall leap for joy." And again, "They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the beauty of our God."<sup>\*</sup> What does this sight of Jesus produce? a repose, a sweetness, which is the source of inexhaustible delights:

\* Isaiah xxxv. 2.

“The Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness.....and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail.....then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob thy father.”\* But what need to have recourse to the Prophets for proving what the Son of God Himself has taught us? “In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.”† Of what day is He speaking? St. Augustine thinks that He is speaking of the day of eternity; others of the day of Communion; and in truth, there is an intimate connection between these two days—the one is the day of our entrance into Heaven, the other is the day on which Heaven descends to us. On the one day, God says to us, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;”‡ on the other, he says, “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”§ The one introduces us into the joy of our Lord, which is the consummation of our bliss: the other introduces within us the joy of our Lord, which is an anticipation of bliss, or as was said by a great prelate, it is the sample, the foretaste, the lovely initiation into the eternal happiness of the elect. Words of this import were inwardly spoken to the blessed Angela of Foligni, one day when she was preparing herself for Communion; for she heard a voice which said to her distinctly and articulately, “You are making preparation, my dear child, to receive Him who is the only good;” and when she drew near the holy table, she heard another voice

\* Isaiah lviii. 11 and 14.

† John xiv. 20.

‡ Matt. xxv. 23.

§ Apocalypse iii. 20.

which said, "The Son of God dwells upon the altar, in His Humanity and His Divinity compassed about by the blessed spirits who surround Him." Then our Lord appeared to her, and caused her to see by an intellectual vision, without any sensible form or image, that Supreme Majesty in which every good thing is comprised: and at the same time she heard a third voice, which said to her, "Thus thou shalt be with Him eternally in heaven." By these words she was filled with unspeakable joy, approaching in sweetness to that which the Saints taste in Paradise.

## SECTION III.

I acknowledge that these extraordinary favours are vouchsafed to few, because few possess that purity of heart which is required in order to receive them. Hence it is that from want of experience, few can understand how this is brought to pass; but they should not on this account refuse credence to those whom God has favoured with particular graces, or be surprised that the love of infinite goodness and beauty should produce effects which surpass the intelligence of a finite mind, especially when this love arrives at the point of an intimate feeling of our real and corporal union with the incarnate Word, which is the highest point to which happiness can at present attain, and the purest fountain of joy, which souls that are eminent in sanctity, can taste of in this frail and mortal life. For we must observe, that as sensible objects cause us delight by uniting themselves to us, whether it be by the sight of their beauty, or the harmony of their sound, or the odour of their perfume, or the delicacy of their taste and touch, so God,



who is an invisible and spiritual object, rejoices the soul by uniting Himself to it, and making it feel His presence, at one time by the contemplation of His infinite perfections, at another by the perception of His ineffable goodness, now by the sweetness of His inward word, now by the odour of His unspeakable mercies, now by the embraces of His love, so intimate and full of delight that they cannot be expressed. But there is this difference, that whereas the touch is the most gross amongst the bodily senses, it is the most noble, and the most ethereal amongst the spiritual ones. The reason is, because the touch has this peculiarity, that it presupposes the presence of the union with, and a true application to the object of touch. The other senses do not require this, the eye for instance, in order to see distant and separated objects, unites itself to them simply by means of the images which they impress upon it, and which are in place of the true objects. As then the closest union of bodies is also the most material, so the closest union of spirits must be the most noble and most ethereal, and consequently produce joy most pure and spiritual. This is the union which is brought about in a manner so excellent by the use of this heavenly bread, a union which does not belong to all who receive it, but to those rare souls whom the Son of God has chosen to betroth to Himself. He is in reality intimately present with all the faithful who communicate, not only by His divinity which is everywhere, but also by His humanity which exists in every host which the priest has consecrated, but He does not make His presence to be sensibly felt by all. He is united to all, even bodily, but He does not make this union perceptible; and though He gives to many affectionate feelings of devotion,

which fill them with admirable delights, still He rarely grants that effective feeling of the soul, by which, as St. Thomas says, it ravishes and is ravished, takes and is taken, embraces and is embraced, presses and is pressed, in a manner no words can explain. God and the soul uniting themselves one to the other, the soul united only to its one sovereign good, by a bond of love whose sweetness is incomprehensible.

Then it is that the soul understands by its own experience, what our Lord would express by those words of His: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, that they may be one as we also are."\* Then the soul may say what St. Agnes said, after taking the holy Viaticum to prepare herself for her martyrdom: Now the body of my Master is united and associated with mine, and His blood gives beauty to my countenance. At this moment, says St. Macarius, our Lord, by a special favour, takes the soul which He cherishes, and becomes one spirit with her. The soul transforms itself, so to speak, into Jesus Christ; one substance passes into another, in order that it may live anew, taste of life immortal, and participate in the glory of the blessed. Then, says the same father, he whom God favours with this grace, experiences a foretaste of the good things of heaven, of delights that cannot be told, and of the riches of the divinity itself. The Spirit of the Lord gives Himself to holy souls who make themselves worthy of it, to be their rest, their joy, their delight, their life eternal. He makes Himself their food, so that they may enjoy tranquillity, and calm and inexplicable pleasure. Then it is, says St. Bonaventure, that the soul eats the honey with the honeycomb, that is to say, the sweetness of divinity,

\* John xvii. 11.

with the Body and Blood of the Humanity. For it is the property of the elect and of God's favoured ones, thus to eat the Body of the Lord and to drink His Blood, and to be intoxicated with the sweet and intimate perception of the divinity. Then says Dennis the Carthusian, this uncreated object of our love being infinitely lovely, and having an attractive force supremely powerful to touch and kindle the affections, it draws the souls towards itself with such force, such command, and such sweetness, even into the riches of its glory, even into the ocean of joy and beatitude, that the higher faculties of the mind are altogether absorbed, plunged, swallowed up in the abyss of Divinity: and the admiration of God, the sight of Him, the love, the taste, the enjoyment of Him cause the soul to faint, and so rivet its powers of attention upon Him, that all the inferior faculties remain in suspense; their concert and harmony is silent, the body is, at it were, bound and chained down in sleep, the limbs are as if paralysed, their movement stopped, the flesh is like a lifeless trunk, and the whole man lives no longer by an animal life, but by a life altogether intellectual and deified. Finally, says Taulerus, the soul is then elevated to a participation of the divine perfection, and is so filled with the fullness and the sovereign virtue of this perfection, which is nought else but God Himself, that it cannot be touched with any other desire, because in this blessed union it finds all that it desires, viz.: God Himself, and in God all other things, and it finds its own highest perfection beyond all measure, and beyond all time, even to eternity, which is God Himself. This union of the soul with God is a blessed sample of the beatitude which He eternally enjoys Himself;

and contains in itself all the perfection which reasonable creatures shall enjoy in a happy eternity, which perfection is God Himself. In a word, this union has in this period of grace, a certain foretaste which is, properly speaking, the beginning of that divine union between God and the soul which will be consummated throughout all eternity. For this reason not all mankind together are capable of expressing, either by word or writing, the utility, the fruit, the beatitude which a holy soul derives from the participation of the Body of Jesus Christ. Happy is he, says Gerson, who has an habitual union with our Lord; still happier he who has actual possession of Him; but most of all is he happy who possesses Him with face unveiled, and who is transformed from brightness to brightness, into a perfect resemblance to the Divinity, being moved, led, attracted by the Spirit of God, in such sort that he knows by experience the supreme science of charity, that is to say, of that grace of union, of that dear and precious union with the *pure deity*. Here is the end and accomplishment of all that has been said, and of all that can be said in speaking of the praises, the fruits, and the effects of this divine food. All the world, visible and invisible, interior and exterior, has been created for this end. Do you ask me for what end? Most certainly for the end of unity, in order that all things may be consummated in one.

## 134 MEDITATION FOR THE TUESDAY IN THE

### MEDITATION FOR THE TUESDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*The Son of God gives Himself in the Holy Sacrament living, as well as dying, in order to teach us to live according to the Spirit of the Gospel.*

#### FIRST PREPARATION.

HAVING placed yourself in the presence of the Son of God, and adored Him as your Master on the throne of His love, remember that He is living by an excellent and divine life, that He may teach you to live by His Spirit.

#### SECOND PREPARATION.

Ask from Him a ray of His wisdom, and a strong impression of His love, that you may enter deeper than you have hitherto done into the truth, that, if you live by His Spirit, your life is nothing else but the life of Jesus Christ continued in the Apostles, and in all truly Apostolic men, who make with Him one Jesus Christ—one Saviour of souls.

#### FIRST POINT.

Consider that the life of Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrament is very inward and retired, although it be at the same time a public life, in which He treats with all sorts of persons; that His life is very pure, and separated from all contagion of vice, although He live among sin-

ners; that it is a noble, an excellent, and a divine life, although it is at the same time so simple, and He presents no outward appearance but that of the feeble accidents which cover Him. Such ought your life to be, if you live after His Spirit. You ought to be amongst men as a sunbeam, which remains always attached to the principle of light from whence it sprung; you ought to keep yourself united to God, to derive your strength from communion with His divine Majesty, and preserve the purity of your soul with a special and loving care, lest, whilst you think to wash away the stains of others, you become yourself defiled. Finally, you must be well convinced, that it is not the outward brilliancy of your natural talents, not success and reputation, not applause and public admiration, which make up your true glory, and give you any greatness in the sight of God; but that inward life from which these outward gifts derive their efficacy and virtue. It is not that these are to be despised: for when in unison with what is interior they produce great effects; but without solid devotion, without union with Jesus Christ, without the virtue of the soul, the rest is but pure vanity and empty imbecility, a deceitful appearance which may destroy your soul, as it has done the souls of many others. If St. Paul feared lest, having preached to others, he should himself become a cast-away, what ought not you to fear, you who have so little strength, you who have only a little outward show to conceal your shameful defects, and whose inward soul is neglected and miserable?

## SECOND POINT.

Consider that the life of Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrament is a life altogether holy, that it is directed by a wisdom which appears folly to the eyes of flesh, but the contemplation of which entrances the angels; a life which is animated by a love so ardent and ecstatic, that it carries him, as it were out of himself, in marvellous excesses, and sustained by the practice of heroic virtues, which he practises after a manner altogether divine. Here is the model of our life. The spirit which ought to guide it is a spirit of wisdom, which has nothing in common with that human prudence and carnal wisdom, which is only clever in upholding its own paltry honour, in begging for favour and support, in procuring friends, and gaining fortunes, as if the Christian who has renounced and despised the world could have anything to do with fortune-making. The true wisdom which the Spirit of Jesus communicates to us, draws all its light from heaven; it has regard only to heaven, and prizes nothing except in so far as it accords with God's will, and conduces to His glory; it has no taste or esteem but for such things as regard God's service, the sanctification of the soul, and the salvation of our neighbour. It is animated by a filial love, which does nothing by constraint or through human respect; which finds nothing bitter or difficult; which knows no other bounds than the good pleasure of God, the order of superiors, and the maxims of the Gospel. Finally, the virtues which it practises are solid virtues, not confined to actions which are pleasing and agreeable, but which make themselves known by their good effects. Alas! it is very

much to be feared that, by going over again the life we have hitherto led, and measuring it by these three rules, we shall find it extremely defective! How much false knowledge and illusion, what coldness and weakness in our love, what empty appearance in our devotions, and want of solidity in our virtues! We adore Jesus Christ in the morning as our Master and Director, but the actions of the day are none the better regulated; we adopt Him for our Model, but, instead of imitating Him, we follow some other path; we promise Him that we will gain the mastery over ourselves, but it is only an idea; the least occasion of trial shows us what we are; we pray Him to rule our senses and our appetites, but we never obey Him; we protest that we have Him present before us in our conversation, and still it is not the less secular and worldly.

## THIRD POINT.

Consider that the life of Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrament is a life full of marvels and prodigies; for although He is in a state of glory, and enjoys all the greatness of royalty, He is nevertheless in a state of humiliation, which will continue to the end of the world; although he is impassible, yet he exercises a long and invincible patience amidst the numberless causes of offence which we give Him; although He is confined within the compass of the Host, He is yet found in almost every country of the globe; although He is immortal, He ceases to exist in the Sacrament, and loses His miraculous existence under the species, every time that they become corrupted; although He has been on our altars for more than eighteen centuries, He



comes there anew every day : indeed, it may be said, that in some part or other of the world, He renews His sacramental life every hour. Such, again, is the life of those who act only by the spirit of Jesus Christ. They know how to come to God by honour and dishonour, to abase themselves in the midst of applause, to lift themselves up above reproach, to suffer a thousand labours, and never to lose their peace of mind, as if they were impassible ; they never relax in their endeavours, their good resolutions do not grow old and languish, they renew their strength every day : finally, they continually die to self, and preserve with constancy and inviolable perseverance the fidelity they owe to God. How wonderful is the life of those men who are dead to the world ! How these lowly souls, who are nothing in their own sight, are the rare master-pieces of God's grace, and able to work miracles for His glory ! As to you, what sort of life do you lead ? Enter seriously within yourself, and you will find cause enough for humiliation. Doubtless your life is full of prodigies, but of prodigies very different from these. The world takes you for a man of God, and in reality you are opposed to the will of God. You wear the habit of the Saints, and you retain the imperfections of the worldly. Men believe that you seek for souls, whilst you are nothing but a self-seeker. You profess to convert the world, and yet it is the world that perverts you.

DISCOURSE FOR THE WEDNESDAY IN THE OCTAVE  
OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*Jesus Christ invites all who fear death. The life which He communicates to those who participate in the Eucharistic mysteries.*

“Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.”

“Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”—Matt. xi. 28.

The faithful of the African Church used in ancient times to invite each other to the sacred banquet of the Eucharist, by affectionately saying: “Let us come to life.” These holy words teach us at the same time how greatly we are beloved by the Son of God, since He gives us His Flesh and His Blood in this divine Sacrament, and also how greatly we are bound to love Him, since He gives Himself to be our life.

This promise He has made us is so often repeated in the Gospel, that no room is left us to doubt of the greatness of His love. He says: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world. Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you.”\* Observe how He takes pleasure in repeating the same thing again and again! It is because He

\* John vi. 52, 54.

knows how fond men are of life, and He desires that we should love Him also, for He is our true life.

If nothing can be more certain than our Lord's strong desire of imparting life to us, nothing can be more sublime than the mode in which He accomplishes this. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, the same shall also live by Me."\* I will give him the life which I receive from My Father. The sublimity of this discourse astonished many of His disciples, who were too gross and carnal-minded to receive this saying, and consequently forsook their Master. Let not us be so blind as to follow them in their wanderings, but let us say with the chief of the Apostles: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Speak, then, O Word incarnate, and dispose our minds to receive Thy light, and discover to us by Thy grace what is that life which Thou hast hidden in this adorable Mystery, the source from whence it springs, and the vessel which receives it.

"I live by the Father." Here is the source of life. "He that eateth Me." Here is the vessel which receives the life. "Shall live by Me." Here is the life which is communicated.

#### SECTION I.

*The fountain of that life which the Son of God communicates to us in the adorable Sacrament.*

If we are to judge of the excellency of this life by the fountain from whence it springs, in the same manner that we estimate the qualities

\* John vi. 58.

and virtues of natural waters, we must remark, that the source of this fountain of living water, which irrigates the paradise of the soul, and causes all the flowers and plants of christian virtue to bloom and flourish, is the Divinity Itself. It exists in the bosom of the eternal Father, who receives it from no other. This is its origin and principle. The eternal Father communicates it to His Son, Who is His Word and the term of His knowledge; you are aware that the first of all lives is to know. St. John says that in the Word was life, and the life is the light of men, because it is a life of knowledge, a life of intelligence, and consequently a life of light. The Father and the Son working together in unity of principle, communicate this life to the Holy Spirit, because as light produces heat, so does the Word produce love. The Holy Spirit receives this life in the Trinity, but He communicates it to none; for the Spirit is love, and love is a sweet repose, and as it were the centre of the divine operations. The Holy Ghost then must, if I may so express it, go out of His own sphere, in order that He may render to the Son in His human nature what the Son gave to Him in His Divine Person. This the Holy Ghost does in the Incarnation, which is a work of love common to the Three Divine Persons, but proper to the Holy Ghost, because love is the characteristic of His Divine Person, and all works of love are attributed to Him, but more especially that of the hypostatic union, in virtue of which the Divinity, which is the source of life, corporally inhabits the sacred Humanity of the Incarnate Word. Thus, as St. Cyril says, the Body of the Son of God retains a virtue and an admirable power to vivify our souls; because it is not like other

frail bodies, but it is the Body of Life Itself, retaining all the virtue of the Word, and filled with the power of the Almighty, by Whom all things live and have their being. These are the degrees of the divine communications; these are the springs of life and the scale by which life descends to us when we participate in the divine mysteries. Hence it follows, that the life promised to those who eat the bread of heaven, is not only a life of grace, for Baptism gives this, and Penance restores it, and the Eucharist nourishes it, and causes it to increase; but it is life by participation of the Divinity Itself; it is the life which the eternal Father gives to His Son, which the Father and Son give to the Holy Spirit, and which the Holy Spirit gives to the Humanity of the Incarnate Word, to be shed abroad upon all men. So that it may be truly said that, when we have eaten of the fruit of the tree of life, we are in reality as Gods, and that the promise which Jesus Christ has made us is not less effective and sincere than the promise of the serpent in the garden of Eden was false and deceitful. This is the meaning of St. Denys, when he assures us that the person who communicates binds and unites himself to Jesus Christ in the likeness of a sincere and divine life. St. Gertrude testifies that she has herself experienced this; for, after she had one day communicated, she saw her own soul, as it were a clear crystal shining with a brilliant light, in the midst of which was the Divinity, like the appearance of pure gold, and so marvellously did God work within her that all the courts of heaven were ravished with delight, and all the blessed spirits seemed to say to her, that it was their delight to see the wonderful operations of God in the faithful soul which had possession of

Him, when there were no clouds of sin to trouble the beauty of the spectacle, and put an obstacle to His divine work within it.

## SECTION II.

*The excellence of this life in itself,*

In order that we may the better discover the excellence of this life which we receive in the holy Sacrament, we must remark, that by the union we contract with the Incarnate Word in this mystery, we are incorporated with Him, and become members of His Body, and consequently we have a right to live by the life of our Head. Now, the Son of God has received from His Father three sorts of life: the first by His eternal generation, the second by His incarnation, the third by His resurrection. The first is a divine life, the second a passible life, the third an immortal and glorious life. These are the three gifts He presents to us in giving us His Body and Blood. First, he transmits to us His divine life, causing the faculties of our soul to live by an inward life of spirit and of light, which reflects honour on His eternal birth, which is hidden in the bosom of His Father. He gives life to our memory by bringing before it that infinite goodness which forced Him to die for our salvation, and to perpetuate the memory of His death. He would that this adorable mystery should be the seal of His love, to stamp upon our hearts the impression of His life and of His death. He gives life to our understandings by the knowledge of His greatness and the light of eternal truths; He supports its life, as the wise man tells us, by the bread of life and understanding; and gives it the

waters of health-giving wisdom to drink. The divine Eucharist is called the feast of light, the food of life, the meat of heavenly delights, because, as St. Ambrose says, it is the source from whence we draw instructions which are useful and necessary to our salvation. He gives life to our wills by the flames of His love; on which account the Fathers say that the divine Sacrament is a fire, and that we devour this fire by eating His Body and Blood. It is a divine flame, which, being more powerful than any substance it touches or takes hold of, transforms the will into itself, consumes its faults, and destroys its imperfections; instead of being light and vacillating, the will is rendered by this flame firm and constant in virtue; instead of being timid, it is made strong and courageous; instead of being impatient, it becomes immoveable and invincible under the most violent assaults of temptation; its lukewarmness becomes zeal and ardour, its languor diligence and activity; from being earthly it is converted to heavenly. This sacred fire, says St. Chrysologus, causes him who is made of earth to become heavenly; it makes him who was animated by a merely human spirit, to live by the Spirit of God; it lifts him up to God so wonderfully, that it takes away from him all that remained of the old man, of sin, and death, and labour, and sorrow. To see him you would say that he was no longer man, or, if he was still a man, a divine man, with divine thoughts and affections, with a divine heart and soul, with a divine body, perfectly subject to the laws of the spirit, which direct him up to God, and make him live to God, even in the midst of mortality. Our second gift from Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrament is the gift of His passible life, which He

transmits to us by giving us the spirit of the Cross, the spirit of exterior and interior mortification, which makes us live a life of labour and suffering. For whatever mortifies the flesh and the senses, gives life to the spirit, and what weakens the body, redoubles the powers of the soul. St. Chrysostom remarks, that the first Christians left the Eucharistic table courageous as lions, and in the midst of their punishments and tortures they cast around them shooting sparks of the fire that was consuming them within. The Abbé Franco says that the most clear sign of our profiting by this heavenly food, is, when a man is found to suffer injuries with patience, to despise the contempt of others, and "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ." This man of a truth eats life at the table of the Lord, and drinks of His chalice; then indeed Jesus Christ lives in him, and he in Jesus Christ. Certainly, the surest mark of a particular food being good for us, is when it communicates to us gifts of health, when it cools the blood, purifies the humours, and supplies an abundance of animal life to invigorate the body. Now, what are the qualities of this divine Lamb who feeds us with His Flesh and Blood, if they be not sweetness, patience, mortification, obedience, love of suffering, and contempt? What does He exhale in this adorable mystery except it be the sweetness of the Cross? What state is He in, when He sacrifices Himself on the altar, if He is not in a state of death? I know that His body is also alive and glorious, and in virtue of this quality He transmits to us a third life of glory and beatitude. But, then, this glorious life by a marvellous relationship is the fruit of His death, and we never partake of it more fully than when



we have the largest share in the sufferings of His passible life. It is to mortified men that the holy Sacrament gives the strongest claim to the glories of the resurrection; and as Tertullian says, the more our bodies are wasted by austerities, the greater will be their agility when they rise from the grave. It is into mortified souls that He inspires the most burning and ardent desires of beatitude, because their life here below is one of expectation and suspense. These are they whom He causes to taste beforehand of the delights of eternity in the fountain of life. If it be true, in short, that the holy Sacrament is the beatitude of the earth, it is so in favour of those who are lovers of the cross; and if we desire to reign with the Son of God, we must also suffer with Him.

## SECTION III.

*What the subject ought to be which receives this life.*

This thought draws me back again insensibly into the consideration we have just quitted, regarding the dispositions of the subject who receives the Incarnate Word by partaking of His Flesh and Blood. For since there is a conformity of life between the Son of God and he who receives Him, there must also be a resemblance in their dispositions, in order perfectly to verify those words: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me."\* Now, I find in Jesus Christ four things which make Him live by the life of the Father, and which we must imitate if we would

\* St. John vi. 58.

live by His life,—viz., mission, union, indwelling, and return.

As I derive My life from My Father in consequence of My mission from Him, says Cajetan, so whoever eats My Body, which has life in itself, shall receive life from Me. Here we have the mission. "The Son of God," says St. Thomas, "receives life from the Father, because He is One with the Father;" he, therefore, who is united to Jesus Christ by Communion, receives life from Jesus Christ. Here we have the union: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me, and I in him;" consequently, he possesses within himself the source of life, as I also possess it, because I am in My Father, and My Father in me." Here we have the indwelling. The reason why I live by the love of My Father, that is to say, that I owe My life to Him as to one Who is greater than I, is the state of humiliation into which He has sent Me; and the reason why man lives by My love is the participation of My Body which I give to him to eat. I therefore live in a state of humiliation for the glory of My Father; but the exaltation of man is to live for the glory of My name. Here we have return, which explains to us what we must do, in order to live by the holy Sacrament after the design of Jesus Christ.

We are taught by the mission of Jesus Christ that we must not communicate of our own will, or on account of any mere natural movement, if we desire to profit by it, but that we must receive our mission from the Holy Spirit, who leads us either by inward inspirations, or by the advice of a wise director, or by the superiors under whose government we are placed. Cardinal Cajetan teaches, that although it be not absolutely neces-

sary for us to take the advice of a director, and that it is sufficient "to prove ourselves,"\* according to the doctrine of the apostle, as explained by the Council of Trent, still it is the safest course for us to regulate our communions by his direction, and generally speaking, not to approach the holy table except in obedience to him.

Union, which is still more necessary than mission, teaches us that to live by this heavenly bread, we must be united to our head by sanctifying grace, and to His body mystical by faith and brotherly love. There is, says St. Augustine, nothing which a Christian ought to fear more than being separated from Jesus Christ, for when he is separated, he is no longer a member of His body, and if he is not a member of Jesus Christ, he cannot be quickened by His spirit. "Now if any have not the spirit of Christ," says the apostle, "he is none of His."† But besides this habitual union, there must be in addition an actual union of our minds to that of Jesus Christ; we must think seriously of what we are about to do, to apply our attention to the divine mysteries, centering upon them all our thoughts, desires, and affections, and bringing with us that modesty of deportment and self-recollection, which befits the presence of a God, who imparts Himself with such infinite liberality and love.

The indwelling of Christ shows us that it is not sufficient that we eat the bread of angels, and admit Jesus Christ within us for a moment, but He must take up His abode there; otherwise we are like abortive children, who lose their life within the womb of their mothers as soon as they have received it. This want of steadfastness is a deplorable failing, and arises generally from

\* 1 Cor. xi. 28,

† Romans viii. 9.

the bad dispositions which we bring with us to communion. St. Augustin says, that the best proof of our making a good use of the divine Eucharist, is to see whether we abide constantly in Jesus Christ and He in us ; He dwells in us, says the same father, if we are His temple. This is a sure sign of our deriving fruit from the participation of His body, but if we would not be ungrateful for the divine life He gives us, we must make a faithful return of it to His glory, so that there be not a single hour or moment of it which is not entirely consecrated to Him, and this acknowledgment is the final accomplishment of our duties. O my beloved Jesus, it is my most ardent desire to be henceforward entirely Thine, and to exist only for Thee. Alas ! I have hitherto lived too much for worldly vanities and my own selfish interests. When shall I breathe only for Thy honour ? Ah Lord, does not my life belong to Thee ? Art not Thou my life, my light, my strength, my wisdom, and my eternal joy ? Eat these and drink, O ye mortals, says St. Augustin, all ye who desire to escape death, come and eat life, and drink life.

## 150 MEDITATION FOR THE WEDNESDAY IN THE

### MEDITATION FOR THE WEDNESDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*Jesus Christ does not only give Himself in the holy Sacrament living and dying, but also vivifying and inspiring life into our souls, to teach us in what spirit we ought to work out our own salvation.*

“Panis Dei est qui de cœlo descendit, et dat vitam mundo.”

“The bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world.”—St. John vi. 33.

#### FIRST INTRODUCTION.

PROSTRATE in spirit at the feet of Jesus Christ, imagine that you see your divine Master seated on the throne of His love, and teaching you by His example what are the qualities of a perfect labourer in the gospel vineyard, who ought to be so replenished with the life and spirit of God, as to be able to impart life to others, and to animate them in the way of perfection.

#### SECOND INTRODUCTION.

Ask of Him a spark of His ardent charity to kindle in you afresh this sacred fire and apostolic spirit, that spirit of zeal and love which has lost so much of its vigour by your faintness of heart.

#### FIRST POINT.

Consider that Jesus Christ still daily descends

from heaven upon this earth, for the very same purpose as when He first descended, that is to say, to work for the salvation of souls. For although He still finds His delight in being with the sons of men, still it is not for His own pleasure that He seeks after us, nor for the purpose of receiving from men the homage which He may justly claim, but it is because of the high value at which He prizes souls, that He may impart life to them, and enable them to find salvation by their obedience and submission to the spirit with which He inspires them. For this end He lives amongst men in the Holy Sacrament, as a divine charm to attract them, as the burning coal of the Prophet to purify them, as the seed of a divine existence, and as the seal of their perfection, which He applies inwardly to the soul, to impress upon it the image of his holiness. Such also ought he to be who acts towards his neighbour in the true Spirit of Jesus, and such must be the spirit of those Apostolic labourers whom the Great King sends forth into the world to invite men to His Feast. The Apostolic labourer must have a great love for souls, and always prefer their salvation before any other interest or pleasure, honour or repose. If he is diligent in his labours, and puts forward every attraction to gain the hearts of men, he does not do this to win them over to himself, but only for God; if he searches after them, it is not out of any regard for his own reputation, but to bring them on to perfection; if he converses with the world, it is not for his own amusement, or in compliance with his own inclinations, or to pass his time agreeably, but that he may conduct other men with him to a happy eternity. Are you of this spirit? Are these your thoughts and designs?

How many souls have you gained since you entered into God's service? Alas! if you were called upon at this moment to quit the world, how few would you see around you! how many souls have perished whom you might have saved! and yet you think this a light matter, and a cause insufficient to make you quit your present mode of life.

#### SECOND POINT.

Consider in the second place, that although the intentions of the Son of God are so pure, and He is possessed with so ardent a desire for the salvation of souls, still He comes amongst us out of obedience—an obedience wonderful in itself and in all its circumstances. He not only pays this obedience to His Father, but actuated by the Spirit of love, even to the last and lowest of mankind, provided he be invested with the power, and stamped with the character of a priest. No sooner does he speak the word than He is immediately present. So constant is He in His perseverance that eighteen centuries have not made Him weary. He obeys with such indifference and resignation, that after He has descended upon the altar, He does not quit it, unless He is carried to the mouth of the person who receives Him, however desirous he may be of taking up His lodging within his heart, and giving him the sacred kiss of peace. Such ought to be the dispositions of him who acts in the true Spirit of Jesus. Whatever emotion he feel for the salvation of souls, obedience must be his principle: he must receive all his employments from the hand of God and from the mouth of his superiors. To act by his own choice would only be pernicious to himself and

hurtful to his neighbour. Whatever talents he may have, he must be ready to remain in concealment all his life, for he is not more powerful than Jesus Christ, who is ready to fly whenever and wherever obedience may require, with an indefatigable courage. Is your zeal so regulated? do not give a flattering answer before God: are you without any secret spot, or private scheme, indifferent to do all that is required of you? When will you open your eyes to your duty, and keep them closed against the invitations of your own passions, and the regard of men?

### THIRD POINT.

Consider, that the love of Jesus Christ for souls is a universal love. He makes Himself all things to all men, without distinction between noble and common, rich and poor, learned and ignorant. He is consolation to the afflicted, strength to the weak, counsel and knowledge to the simple; even sinners who are at enmity with Him, He does not reject; for if He cannot receive them whilst they continue such, at least they may pray to Him; He listens to their prayers, and by His intercessions for them appeases the wrath of His Father.

Such ought to be the zeal of him who does the work of an evangelist; he should look to souls, and not to the rank of men; and even in men's souls he should look only to Jesus Christ, having an equal desire to assist the poor and the rich; and if any inclination is allowable, it must be towards those who are in low estate, bearing in mind that it is such as these for the most part, who pay court to the Son of God, who visit Him and throng around Him, whilst



the great of the world are kept at a distance by their pride and wickedness.

Here make serious reflection on the past. Examine what faults you have been guilty of in your relations with your neighbour. Make search for the roots of these sins that you may pluck them out, and whilst you are full of shame on account of your past disorders, think of the best means of correcting them, and of renewing within you the spirit of Jesus Christ.

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DISCOURSE FOR THE OCTAVE OF THE HOLY  
SACRAMENT.

OF THE SACRED VIATICUM.

*The Son of God in the Holy Sacrament, offers Himself to persons in their agony, to console and succour them at the hour of death.*

“Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.”

“Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”—Matt. xi. 28.

WE read in the history of the Church, that St. Lucian, one of the most illustrious witnesses for the faith of Jesus Christ, remained fourteen days in prison, lying on a heap of broken tiles, his body torn with wounds, his strength exhausted, faint with hunger and thirst, and yet unable to die, although he had been the whole of this time without any nourishment to support life; but no sooner had he received the viaticum, than he peacefully expired, and closed his martyrdom by uttering the glorious confession, I am a

Christian. This extraordinary favour teaches us on the one hand, the care which the Son of God takes of His faithful servants at the moment of their death, and also shows us how necessary the divine Sacrament is for us in our last combat, since He prefers to violate the laws of nature, rather than deprive those who love Him of so great a benefit.

It is not the beginning of a Christian life, but the end of it which confers the crown. A happy and a holy death has beatitude for its dowry, and heaven for its heritage. This is the reason why all the world seeks after it. It is loved by kings, and sighed after by sages; it is courted by nobles, and regarded by all Christians as the common object of their desires; but it is the predestinated alone who wed it as their spouse. It is the privilege of saints and the recompense of virtue, and it is the fruit of the divine Eucharist, on which account this Sacrament may be called the blessed consummation of our life.

It is by the holy Eucharist that the Son of God finishes the course of His journey; and if He was a pilgrim upon earth, it was that by means of the communion, He might arrive at the centre of our hearts, to which He longed to come, as the traveller longs for his native country. It was not enough that He should institute this sacred feast on the eve of His passion, as the last effort of His love, but as St. Chrysostom says, He first administered the communion to Himself, by this means inviting His disciples to be partakers in the mystery; it was His will to be both the guest and the banquet, the food and the eater of the food; and this He did, as theologians judiciously remark, not that He might receive any increase of grace, but that He might

taste its sweetness before drinking of the bitter chalice of death.

It was by the viaticum that the martyrs disposed themselves for their last combat, thinking themselves ill prepared if they were not furnished with these spiritual weapons, and were not covered with the Blood of Christ.

Under this protection all the faithful who aspire to a heavenly crown must finish their course. It is the bread of Elias which gives them strength to arrive at their heavenly country, after accomplishing their earthly pilgrimage.

With this also we must terminate our considerations on this octave, because it is the most signal favour of Jesus Christ, and the most sensible token of His love. All the precious graces He has bestowed upon us may be lost after their reception, and so become useless to us; but a happy death, to procure which He now imparts Himself to us, assures to us all preceding favours, and makes them pass with us into eternity. This testimony of His love is the more worthy of our attention, because it is given at a time when we are most in need of friends, and find ourselves most deserted by them. As there are few friendships which come from heaven, so there are few which return thither. Friendship is the first of his good things which the dying man loses together with his life, whether he be rich or poor. If he is poor, he dies abandoned by all, no friends or relations are found near him, because neither one or the other have anything to hope from him. Far from regretting his death, they secretly rejoice at it, because his relations feel that they are disencumbered of a heavy burden, and his friends of a reproach. If he is rich, his heirs crowd around his bed, as ravenous

birds assemble themselves in flocks when they scent the odour of their prey. Each thinks to enrich himself from the spoils, and make his profit out of the ruins, but none thinks of saving his soul from shipwreck ; they talk to him of his will, but no man speaks to him of repentance ; each desires to have a part in his succession, but none trouble themselves about his conversion. It is the Son of God alone whose love is stronger than death, and more durable than time, and who keeps in remembrance those who have served Him faithfully.

Far from abandoning them at this moment, He commands them to receive Him, and so far is He from refusing them assistance, that He only fears lest they should reject it. He places Himself in a condition in which both rich and poor can equally possess Him, and He attaches Himself so closely to all, that death which cuts asunder the firmest unions, cannot separate this. He has no interest in being near them, but He is attracted to them by the hope, not of seizing on their goods, but of imparting to them the riches of heaven. It is true that His Father has made Him heir of all things, and that in virtue of this title our souls are His inheritance, and that He would feel their loss. But if He is jealous for His heritage, and takes great care of His property, the only advantage He derives from it, is to bind us to Him in our last agony, by giving us His sacred Body as a sovereign remedy against all the perils of death. This will form the subject of this discourse, that we may see how the Son of God in the holy Sacrament is our only strength and consolation at the moment of death ; that it is He who makes our death precious, and takes away from it all fear and all evil, whether it be by His presence or by His

example, by the grace of the Sacrament or by the power of the cross, whose merits He applies to us.

#### SECTION I.

*The Son of God consoles us by His presence at the moment of death.*

I SAY, in the first place, that He consoles us at the moment of our death, and drives away all the terrors of death by His presence.

If death be a departure out of this world and a voyage to eternity, is it not a great consolation to find a faithful friend for our companion, who will conduct us in safety to our destination, on a journey so difficult, unknown, and dangerous, and beset with so many invisible enemies? What companion could we have more desirable than the Son of God? Who can know the road to Paradise better than He who has marked it with His own Blood? Who can conduct us thither so safely, as He who does not, like the best of our earthly friends, part with us at the grave, but who accompanies us even to Heaven? He does for us at this last meeting upon earth what He did for the consolation of His disciples when He was about to take His departure out of the world; He desired before His death to impart Himself to them, and if I may so speak, to penetrate into their very bowels: I know that on this night you will all abandon me to the fury of my enemies, and that the taking of the Shepherd will be the scattering of the flock; but I cannot on this account forsake you, or lose the affection that I bear towards you. I will unite Myself so closely to you, and pour Myself so deep into

your hearts, that no man can tear Me away from you. You will flee away in vain, for even when you leave Me out of a faint-hearted ingratitude, I will still abide with you, and constrain you to bear within you Him from whom you think to separate. Who doubts but that the same charity which suggested to Him this marvellous stratagem of love, still obliges Him to do us the same favour, and that it sometimes happens, if death ensue before the species are corrupted, that His deified Flesh remains united to ours? But supposing that this never happens, it is certain that if He abide not in the body, at least He imparts Himself to the soul, as a faithful guide to conduct it to heaven. And if this be the case, what occasion have we to fear, when He is close to us, and we rejoice in His presence? The meek Saviour walks before you with His hands full of blessings to reward your labours: He walks beside you with His countenance beaming with light to direct you in your path: He walks behind you with His arms outstretched to support you: what can you be afraid of under His protection? Follow Him continually, and you cannot go astray: keep close beside Him, and nothing can fail you: lean upon Him, and be assured that with His assistance you can do all things.

If death is the last struggle upon the issue of which the crown of immortality depends, what more powerful motive can the soldier have to animate his courage than to fight in the sight of his sovereign? now the Christian combats in the sight of his Saviour, like the glorious Machabees, who so nobly braved death in the presence of God.

If death is a rapid torrent, which must necessarily be crossed, although it sweep down into

the abyss an infinite number of the reprobate, who would not esteem himself happy in being able to follow the Ark of the New Covenant, which divides the waters of Jordan, to open for us a passage through death, and give us a happy entrance into the Holy Land, which is the object of our aspirations?

Finally, if death be a dark night which covers us, dimming and then extinguishing the lamp of life: how can we fear darkness in the presence of the sun, or the shadows of death in the presence of life itself? So long as the soul is united to God, death, which only separates it from the body, is a mere shadow which can only frighten children. The true death, says St. Gregory, which causes the greatest saints to tremble, is the separation of the soul from God. That death which separates soul and body, is but the shadow of death. So then if God be with me, as doubtless He is by the participation of His Body, "Though I shall walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils." Why? "For Thou art with me,"\* O Lord, and that is sufficient for me; Thou art the fountain of light and life. If Thou art the source of light, I ought not to fear darkness; if Thou art the source of light, I ought not to fear death. In truth, it belongs to life alone to conquer death, and the sun of the Eucharist alone deserves to bear the name of life. Jesus, in the bosom of His Father, is the source of glory filling His divine understanding with brightness; in the womb of His Mother He is the source of love, setting the whole world in flames, and making the universe a blazing pile. In the cradle He is a source of joy; in the circumcision a fountain of blood; on the Mount of

\* Psalm xxii. 4.

Olives a fountain of tears; on the Cross the source of merit and grace; in heaven the source of happiness and riches; but in the Holy Sacrament He is the spring of life. His Flesh in the adorable Sacrament is the spring of life; and if our souls are killed by original sin, through their union with bodies composed of the corrupt flesh of Adam, and derived from him by the ordinary laws of generation, so on the contrary, they obtain life by their union with the body of Jesus Christ, derived from the womb of the Blessed Virgin, by a miraculous and divine birth. His Blood is the Spring of Life, and whereas in former times men were forbidden to drink the blood of animals with their flesh, because the blood was the life thereof; we are now commanded to drink the Blood of Jesus Christ because it is the soul of our souls, the life of our spirit, and the spirit of our life. His soul is the spring of life, animating and edifying millions of angels and of saints, it is the sacred bond which unites the various parts of the Church; it is the principle which animates and gives movement to the Church, and without which it would be an inert mass, and a prey to the pillage of its enemies. His Divinity is the source of life. By its efficacy our understanding lives a life of enlightenment; our will, a life of grace; our heart, a life of love; our senses, a life of spiritual delights; our body, an incorruptible life which triumphs over death, and finds immortality even in the dust of the sepulchre. Thou art the Fountain of life. O how sweet is this thought to the Christian, who at the hour of death when he receives the divine mysteries, may exclaim: Here is my God, the sight of whom is Paradise; let Him but lift up the veil and I shall be happy. Another moment



and I shall have the happiness of seeing His face unveiled. He is at my side, what evil can befall me whilst He is near? He is my protector, and who will dare to attack me when I am under His defence? I carry life in my bosom, and how can I fear death? What ought we to say to the just man who is about to cross the torrent of death, after having received his Creator? Fear not, be of good courage, you carry God within you, Who is the treasure of eternal happiness.

## SECTION II.

*He consoles us by His example.*

IF the presence of the Son of God has such great power against the fear of death, so also has His example. You will admit that it is no small consolation to die with the Son of God, and, so to speak, at the foot of His Cross. This was the thought which gave such ardour to St. Thomas, and made him say with such resolution, "Come and let us die with Him." If we must die, what death so honourable or so sweet as to die in the company of a God? The inanimate creation, seeing Him in the agonies of death upon Mount Calvary, thought, says St. Leon, that they were about to return into nothingness: the sun was darkened, the moon eclipsed, the rocks rent, the earth trembled with affright; the whole universe, out of compassion for the death of its Author, would willingly have been buried in His tomb. Is it possible then that the heart of a man who believes can be more unfeeling than the rocks, and that he can still be in love with life, when he sees his Saviour dying for love of him? You know that every thing in this divine Sacrament is redolent

of the death of the Son of God, and brings it back to the memory. The memory of it do I say? He renews upon the altar every day the sacrifice of His life, which He offered upon Calvary, and if the mode of offering it be different, the offering itself is always the same—the same sacrifice and the same priest. Every day, as St. Anastasius the Sinaite says, the tree of the Cross bears the fruit of life, that is to say Jesus Christ crucified, who is the food of our souls. Every day, says St. Ambrose, the Church celebrates the funeral of her Spouse.

We may consider the Church in three different states, as an affianced bride, as a spouse, and as a widow. In the first state she continued four thousand years, from the creation, to the Incarnation of the Word—up to that time all the words spoken to her were only words of promise: I will make thee my spouse and be inviolably faithful to thee; and she poured forth sighs and words of desire. O ye heavens pour down your dew upon the earth, and ye clouds allow the Just One to descend—or else there were only prophecies and figures of the future. “Yet one little while and I will move the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and the desired of all nations shall come.”

At the moment of the Incarnation the nuptials of the Church were celebrated, and the alliance of human nature with the divine Word, so long waited for and desired, was happily accomplished. But, alas! the bride did not remain long in the company of her Spouse; the night of her mourning arrived almost as soon as the bright morning of her joy and triumph. Hardly had thirty-three years passed away, than her Spouse was torn away from her by a

bloody and cruel death, which covered the whole world with darkness; and ever since that time the unhappy widow, seeing herself deprived of His sensible Presence, has never ceased daily to celebrate His funeral at the altar, and to make in the divine mysteries a continual and ever living memory of His death. Here He makes an offering of Himself by the hands of the priest, as if He were sacrificing Himself for us upon the cross; and here we present ourselves before God to testify our gratitude. Here He applies to us those graces which he acquired for us by His death. He sacrificed Himself for our redemption, and we sacrifice Him for our sanctification. Without this His Blood would avail us nothing; our faith would be extinguished, our charity would grow cold, our hope would be without anything to support it, and our souls lifeless. On this account St. Gaudentius says, that the sacrifice of the mass is a living representation of the Passion of the Son of God. He is in the hands of the priest as it were on the arms of the cross; the word of the priest is a sharp sword, which mystically separates His Blood from His Body, and puts Him figuratively in a state of death, although He be in reality alive and glorious. Our senses are clothed in mourning, and our reason is covered with a pall, and our heart serves Him for a tomb, the species are His winding sheet, and our tears the sweet spices to embalm His Body, and the angels descend from heaven to assist at His obsequies. It is not, as I said before, that He is not full of life and glory, but the office of death, who does not venture to approach Him, is performed by His love for man. To console us by His example, and to encourage us to suffer from a sense of

duty, what He embraced in the excess of His charity, He places Himself in a state resembling that of the dead. If our senses are destroyed by death, love has reduced Him to a condition in which He can only use them by miracle. If death brings our body to the grave, love shuts Him up within our breast. If death make our body a prey for worms, love makes His Flesh and Blood the food of men, who in comparison of Him are but worms of the earth. O the exceeding greatness, the ecstasy of the love of Jesus! O how true it is that the milk that flows from His breasts upon the altar is in some sort sweeter than the blood which flowed from His wounds on Calvary, which resembles more the juice of the grape which is trodden with violence in the wine-press! O how true it is that the pleasures of life, which charm the heart of man, are nothing to him who has once tasted that delicious milk of heavenly consolation which He pours into the hearts of those who receive Him! Once more: how true it is that death itself has nothing formidable to him who is deeply sensible of His exceeding love, of which He gives us so precious a token in imparting Himself to us at the approach of our death, in order that He may die with us, if the expression may be used, and take away the bitterness of our own death by the sweet remembrance of His! O my Saviour, what do I owe Thee for having made death so lovely! What thanksgivings can I pay in gratitude for such a benefit! I will take fearlessly from Thy hand the sweet chalice of death, because Thou hast first drunk of it, and taken away all its bitterness. Who would refuse to drink after Thee? O how light are my sufferings when I look upon Thy sacred wounds! O how soft

seems the bed upon which I lie, when I think upon the hardness of that cross which was the bed of Thy sorrows!

### SECTION III.

*He consoles us by the grace of the Holy Sacrament.*

This motive is the more powerful to support us in our last combat, since the holy Sacrament which represents the Passion of the Son of God, contains also its power and virtue. It is not difficult to believe this, because this grace is the fruit of the cross, derived from the virtue of its principle (which is the Passion of the Son of God), and from the tree which bears that fruit. Now the virtue of the cross is to disarm death and to give life. Some say that the cross of Jesus Christ was made of the wood of the forbidden tree; others that it was formed out of the wood of the tree of life. If we are to judge by its effects, it seems to me that it partakes of the qualities of both. Like the forbidden tree, it is fatal to the Son of God; and like the tree of life, it is salutary to all mankind. It caused the death of the Saviour of the world, but by His death He takes all the venom and poison out of death, and so weakens its power that it is no more to be feared than a vanquished enemy. Since the cross was planted upon Calvary, death is no more formidable than sleep; formerly he was full of terrors, but now the Saints despise him, good men triumph over him, and even sinners have strength enough to overcome him with the weapons of penance. I say the same of the divine Eucharist. It is a Sacrament of strength, which arms us against death. The bread which we here take is more powerful

than that with which Daniel slew the dragon. The chalice here presented to us is full of that Blood in which God has placed the life of our souls and bodies. The ancients were accustomed to give to criminals condemned to death a drink of myrrh mingled with wine, either to take away from them the fear of death, together with the use of their senses, or else to fortify their courage, and give them more strength to undergo the sufferings to which they were condemned. We are all criminals condemned to death, in punishment for our sins. What does the Son of God do for our consolation? He mingles for us wine and myrrh in the divine Sacrament, that is to say, His Blood, together with the bitterness of His sorrows; and at the same time that He fortifies our heart against the sorrows of death, He beguiles our senses with a sacred intoxication and a pleasant sleep, causing them to forget all created things? O how precious is that cup! how delicious is that draught! how holy and religious is the intoxication which it causes, for, as St. Cyprian says, it makes us lose ourselves in God in transports of love, and forget all the things of time, that we may stretch forward to that eternity which is placed within our view; nay, more than this, having no feeling for the things of this world, and despising the evil pleasures of riches, we bind ourselves closely to the cross, we suck His sacred Blood, and, so to speak, put our tongue into the very wounds of our Redeemer, to inebriate ourselves with His love.

In truth, if we quit these general considerations, and examine more closely what it is which renders death formidable, we shall immediately see with what ease all its terrors are dissipated

by the power of this cup, and by the virtue which is concealed in this august Sacrament.

In the first place, if the loss of all temporal goods and of all that we hold most dear in the world, is a subject of fear and sorrow, who does not know the words of the martyr St. Ignatius, that the chalice of the altar is a chalice of love, because the nourishment and increase of charity is the proper effect of the Sacrament which it contains? Now, whoever loves God ardently has no great difficulty in bidding adieu to creatures, and detaching himself from the earth. The fire of divine love is, as it were, a stranger in the world, it is not at its ease whilst it lives upon earth, and it suffers the period of its exile with impatience; so that it is always ready to take its departure with joy, and triumphantly to lift itself up towards heaven, which is the centre of all its aspirations. When the sun mounts above the horizon, we see the light vapours rise into the air, and resolve themselves into rain or dew. In like manner, when the sun of the Eucharist rises above the darkness of death, holy persons are seen to quit the earth, and rise gently towards the place of their beatitude, whilst their eyes pour down showers of sweetness and consolation. The loss of pleasures, honours, and riches, does not affect them; it is not a subject of complaint with them that they are obliged to leave them, rather it is their joy and triumph. Farewell to the world, farewell to the pleasures of life, I quit you all with joy that I may enjoy the presence of God. O death, how beautiful dost thou seem to me, since all the light of paradise beams upon thy face! In the second place, if we fear the pains that accompany death, what was it, tell me, that gave strength and courage to the martyrs to

support their torments, and to die with constancy, but the blood of Jesus Christ, with which they were so intoxicated as to appear insensible, not only to the tears and lamentations of their relations, but to the most cruel punishments which the fury of their executioners could invent? Do you suppose, my brethren, says St. Augustine, that these noble athletes, who were willing to die for the faith of Jesus Christ, were sober? They were so drunken that they knew neither friends nor kinsfolk. Their relatives, their children, their wives, wept around them, and they never perceived it. They were stretched upon racks, their flesh was torn with combs of iron, they were burnt with blazing torches, and their bodies seared with hot iron, and yet these tortures produced such small effect upon their unconquerable courage, that they might be said not to have felt them. Do not be astonished at this, he says, for they were drunken. Do you ask what made them drunken? They had partaken of that intoxicating chalice. Look at the beloved disciple, who stepped without fear into the cauldron of boiling oil, and who came out from it more strong and vigorous than before. Whence did he derive this strength? From that cup of which he drank at the last Supper. Look at St. Andrew who kissed and embraced his cross, and made it a pulpit from whence he preached the Gospel, and a theatre for exhibiting his constancy. Whence did he derive this joy? From the Blood of the Lamb which he offered daily in sacrifice. Look at St. Laurence, who blessed God upon the burning gridiron which consumed his flesh, and stole away his blood and his life, drop by drop, whilst at the same time it opened for him the gates of paradise.



Look at that victorious army of Saints, who triumphed amidst their torments, and wearied out the cruelty of these executioners by their courage and endurance. What was it which inspired them under their horrible punishments with so unconquerable a nobility of mind, except it be that mysterious wine which produces martyrs as well as virginal spouses for Jesus Christ?

Moreover, if we have a natural fear of the separation of soul and body, if the remembrance of the grave, and of worms, and corruption, horribly impresses our senses, who would not receive consolation by partaking of the bread of life, which is the germ of our resurrection, and the virtue of which will hereafter animate our bones, and raise our bodies from the dust to adorn them with the robe of immortality? St. Chrysostom assures us that angels surround the graves of those, who before their departure have received the sacred Viaticum, and guard their ashes as a precious deposit, which they must exhibit one day at that great assembly where all men will be judged according to their works. For this reason some celebrated theologians think it probable that the Saviour of the world will shed over these glorious bodies, as a reward of their frequent communions, a dazzling brightness of beauty, which other bodies will not enjoy. It was with a similar feeling that the early Christians, intimately persuaded of the power of the divine Eucharist, are supposed by some to have buried it together with the bodies of the faithful, placing as it were, life and death in the same tomb; because they believed, according to the doctrine of the fathers, that the Body of the Son of God was the true remedy for mortality, the

pledge of the resurrection, and the principle of life eternal.

And wherefore is it do you think, that the use of this life-giving flesh has so many times restored health to the sick by visible miracle, that it has been to many in the place of all other nourishment for many years together, who have taken no other food than the holy Sacrament, that they have been seen lifted up in the air, emitting a perfume of wonderful sweetness, filled with new strength and extatic joy, enlightened with a marvellous brightness which beamed from their countenance by an anticipation of their beatitude; wherefore these wonders, unless it be to show us, that He is the life not only of our spirits but also of our bodies, for which He will one day take vengeance upon death, and make them partakers of the joys of eternity? If these effects are not present, but postponed to the end of the world, do not think that the virtue of the Sacrament is the less powerful, because its operation is slow and secret. The leaven does not raise the dough at once, but requires time to spread abroad its heat and diffuse it throughout the mass. So the holy Sacrament, which is the mystical leaven of the gospel, will some day raise from their graves the whole race of mankind; but the time when this shall be is determined by the wisdom of God. There are antidotes as well as poisons which are not immediate in their operation, but which still do not fail to produce their effects slowly. We must so judge of the divine Eucharist, it is the antidote of death equally salutary to the body and soul of those who receive it, only with this difference, that it is a present remedy which operates on the soul immediately and without delay. On the body it acts more slowly, but not the less

surely. I know, and I believe, that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall see Him one day with these fleshly eyes in His glorious kingdom. My hope is not founded only on the promises which He has made in both Testaments to the predestinated, it is founded on the most adorable of all the mysteries of the faith, the mystery of His Body and Blood, the participation of which makes us members of our glorious Head, and gives us a new claim to the resurrection, and a larger share in the splendour of His triumph. These eyes of mine shall see that divine countenance, which is the throne of essential beauty, and the sight of which is the happiness of the blessed in heaven. This heart of mine shall for ever love this sovereign goodness, which ravishes the spirits of all who inhabit the heavenly Jerusalem. This mouth shall bless for all eternity the King who reigns there, and I shall be as a temple consecrated to His praise, and resounding unceasingly with canticles of joy, whose delicious harmony shall never be interrupted with tears and sorrow. This it is that consoles the servants of Jesus Christ, and makes death so sweet and delightful to them. A soul which is inwardly united to its Saviour by the grace of the Sacrament, is above the influence of any earthly pleasure. Its delight is to meditate on the joys of heaven, its desire is to enjoy them. Its happiness at present is to be in possession of the source of all these joys, and to hold itself in readiness to quench its thirst in that torrent of delights, where all the cares of earth are drowned in endless happiness.

You will tell me that what happens to the body ought not so much to alarm the Christian, but that he ought to tremble for the ills of the soul, that he has reason to fear not only the

snarcs and malice of his unseen enemies, but also the reproaches of his own conscience, and the account for every moment of his life, which he must render to God's justice before his entrance into eternity, into which he throws himself at a venture, not knowing whether happiness or misery awaits him. I acknowledge that this fear is very just. But if there is any thing which can moderate it, I say that it is this heavenly bread which the Son of God gives us as our Viaticum in our extreme necessity. Of a truth, if we had to combat with the devil without being covered with His protection, we might well doubt the issue of so unequal an engagement. A man who at the hour of death has not the aid and the strength of Sacraments, is like an unarmed soldier who rushes blindly into danger. But if I have the Son of God as my second in the combat, and if heaven itself take up arms in my defence, what can all the powers of hell avail against me? If the devil should try, by tempting me with fear and with distrust in the mercy of God, to make me despair of my salvation, Jesus Christ is my hope; when I see Him so close to me, and that He comes so lovingly to visit me, I cannot believe that He desires my perdition. If the devil try to shake my faith, and to ensnare my weak understanding by his illusions, Jesus Christ is my light; I do not fear the father of lies, when truth itself is lodged within my heart. Lastly, if he would take away from me the love of my God, Jesus Christ is a consuming fire, His heart is a furnace, into which having once entered, my charity can hardly grow cold.

I know that He is my Judge, and that His justice is most exact and severe, never losing what is rightly due to it, and never sparing the

guilty, when it has once pronounced the sentence of their death. Theologians teach us that He exercises the office of judge invisibly at the moment of our death, and some suppose that He comes down corporally into the chamber of the dying sinner, as He will come in person on that last day which will put an end to all the sins of the world by the punishment of the guilty. Others say that He will be cognizable only to the eyes of the spirit, as if He were present in Body. However this may be, all acknowledge that this judgment is most terrible, and that even just men, when they think seriously upon it, are not free from fear. But observe, I beseech you, amidst all these marks of rigour, how exceeding great is His mercy, in finding out for us a sweet contrivance whereby to temper His justice with mercy, establishing in the very place where He utters His severe judgments, a tribunal at which He may mercifully pardon us. How marvellous is this! He forestalls His own judgment by the Sacrament of His love; on the very spot where He must examine my accounts, He thinks of discharging them, and furnishes me with the means. Before coming to judge me, He offers Himself as my Advocate; and fearing lest He must refuse me entrance into Heaven, He shuts Himself up within my breast, so that if the anger of His Father should exclude me, He must Himself also be banished from Paradise. What then has he to fear who has gained over his judge, and made Him the defender of his cause and the witness of his innocence? Themistocles, flying from the fury of the Athenians, who had conspired to put him to death after the battle of Salamis, was obliged to seek an asylum in the court of the king of Thessaly, who was his ene-

my, and to cast himself at the feet of the queen to implore her clemency. This princess, who was of a very gentle disposition, seeing him prostrate on the earth, was touched with the feeling of his misfortune, and quickly raising him up, immediately gave her own son to him, to accompany him when he presented himself before the king; assuring him that if he conjured the king in the name of the young prince, whom he loved devotedly, to receive him into his favour, he would never be able to refuse him. This was a mode of prayer, as Thucydides says, which could not be rejected. O my brother, the day will come when death will press hard upon you, and you must leave this world; then when you see yourself abandoned by every creature, and destitute of friends, you will be constrained to have recourse to God, and cry to Him for pardon. Alas! what will you do if you have unhappily made Him your enemy by your wicked life? Is not your loss beyond all hope? No, there still remains for you one means of subduing His wrath and regaining His favour. Address yourself to your sovereign mistress the Queen of heaven; ask her humbly to give you her Son, receive Him with profound respect under the veil of the Sacrament, conjure the eternal Father, by those Wounds which His love caused Him to suffer, to receive your poor soul, and shed upon you the rays of His mercy. He cannot repel you; even if His just indignation had changed His heart into adamant, the Blood of the Lamb has power to soften it.

Perhaps the remembrance of your offences troubles the peace of your soul; but if the voice of conscience accuses you, the Voice of Jesus Christ will speak in your defence; if your sins cry aloud for justice, His Blood will demand

your pardon. How guilty soever you may be; if you are touched with a true repentance for your sins at that fearful hour, and wash away the defilements of your soul in the bath of Penance, before receiving this heavenly Food; then I venture to say that you will find your heart disposed to receive the impression of His love, that He will banish the trouble of your soul, and establish it in unchangeable repose. This confidence at the moment of death, is the lot of the predestinated. Their death is like the sleep of a lion, who after having made a great carnage lies down in assurance, and makes all the beasts of the forest to tremble whilst he sleeps. After having destroyed their sins by penance, they go forward like lions to the conquest of Paradise, and even when they succumb to the power of death, they make the devils tremble, because they are red with the Blood of Jesus Christ, who has sacrificed Himself to restore them to life. It is this which separates them from the reprobate, who depart out of the world in horror and despair, whilst the just man dies in peace, with a smile upon his lips, and joy within his heart; or if he shed tears and utter sighs, it is like the mourning of the dove, and he desires only to fly quickly away into the bosom of his God. But the sinner, whose evil conscience makes him resemble the raven, holds a very different language. What is the cry of this raven? It is, says Hugo of St. Victor, To-morrow, to-morrow, do not urge me now. And when they come to tell him, you must think upon God: I intend to do so, he replies, I will think upon Him, there is time enough yet. Do you not desire to receive the Sacraments? Oh I am overwhelmed with pain, I must wait till I am more at ease. In great illnesses we cannot

tell what may happen, persons are often surprised by death. Is it not your wish that a confessor should be sent for? Let him come to-morrow. Delay is dangerous, if you neglect the present moment, perhaps it will be too late: the physicians say there is reason to fear. What! am I given over by the doctors? How can I do penance in so short a time? It is not thus that the disciples of Jesus Christ speak, these are not the mournings of the dove. The just man who finds himself attacked and feels the first approaches of disease, does not delay to order his conscience. He begins first of all by reconciling himself with God, and healing the wounds of his soul, so that God may bless the remedies applied to his body; and if he must yield to the force of the disorder, he has no fear when they come to announce to him the approach of death; he awaits it with a quiet mind, and receives it without disturbance, and sometimes even with marks of joy. Do not let us wait till matters are come to an extremity, the Sacraments will not hasten my death, but they will give confidence to my soul. If I must leave the good things of the world, they are but a deposit consigned to my hands by God, and it is only just that I return them to Him, when He requires it of me. If I must leave my family in affliction and my children orphans, they belong to God more than they do to me; if He desires to take the entire charge of them, I shall no longer be necessary to them. Finally, if I must now die, I knew before that I was mortal; and therefore I must obey His call; He is my Master and my Father, and I abandon myself entirely to His mercy. O my sweet Jesus, my only hope! I am now in that condition in which all created beings must desert me, and I must engage alone



in the combat without their assistance. But since Thou art my protector, I do not need their succour, and if I am now to enter an unknown place, and undertake a dangerous journey, it is my consolation that I have a faithful guide in whose society I can never be lost, or wander from the right path. O how desirable a thing it is to die after receiving the Bread of life! I carry in my bosom an infinite treasure; how can my death be more precious? I am waiting for an eternal crown, how can it come at a more favourable moment? I am close to the source of beatitude, how can it be more happy?

## SECTION IV.

*Conclusion.*

Of a truth, O faithful Christian, is it not an inestimable benefit to die in the bosom of the Son of God, to place your soul in His hands, and hide yourself within His wounds, so that you may be shielded from the wrath of His Father? Alas! I have already told you that, when our last hour shall have come, and death makes his approach, we shall be abandoned by all men, we shall be compassed about with sorrows, the devils will lay snares for us, the image of our crimes will affright us, the world will turn its back upon us, and we shall see its perfidy. Only Jesus Christ will remain with us; but He is sufficient for us, and above all other things. I conjure you therefore, by the care you ought to have of your eternal salvation, that as soon as you are attacked by any disorder you have recourse to Him before all, and that you do not delay to avail yourself of the remedies which He has established in His Church, and above all of

the Holy Sacrament. The Son of God died for the sins of men ; and if you would die a happy and a peaceful death, make haste and eat the Flesh of the Lamb, and drink of the Blood which He has poured out for your offences. Show forth by this proof with what ardour you sigh after your dear country. As the Israelites did not enjoy rest in the land of promise until they had shed their blood freely, and defeated their enemies, so neither do you depart out of this world to enter into the land of Saints until you have destroyed your enemies by penance, and partaken of the Blood of Jesus Christ, which is the remedy for death and the pledge of our glorious immortality. If the Pope, when he makes a journey, has the Sacrament borne before him with the standard of the Cross, what more important and dangerous journey can you make than that of eternity—more important, for it concerns your sovereign good ; more dangerous, because, unless the Son of God regards you with a favourable eye, you cannot hope for salvation ? Do not, then, be rash enough to undertake this journey, without calling Him to your aid, and taking Him for your guide.

But if you desire His favour at your last moments, make now at this present time an inviolable resolution, that no day shall pass without your rendering Him some homage in testimony of your love. If your business will not allow you to assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass, at least enter some church to pay your court to your King, and receive His benediction. If you cannot do this, at least turn your heart towards Him, send up to Him your vows, and sighs, and lamentations, in witness of your sorrow at being deprived of His loved presence. If it happens that He is carried through the

streets, show before heaven and earth that you glory in being His servant. Lastly, do not neglect any opportunities of honouring Him, but embrace them all with avidity: above all, communicate often, and try to do so each time with as much fervour as if it were the last time in your life. Will you promise me this? Are you resolved to keep your promise? Oh, if it be really so, be assured that our divine Saviour, who has promised to dwell with us to the end of the world, will never forsake you, either in life or in death. But if you despise this counsel, and feel nothing but coldness towards this adorable mystery, how can you think to find fervour and consolation at the hour of death? Do you not fear that He will avenge Himself on your contempt, and leave you insensible to your own salvation? Ah, Lord, do not suffer this; turn away this evil far from me, for Thou art my only refuge; I have no other refuge than Thy Wounds, and I desire none other. Thou art my only defence, my salvation, my beatitude, and my life, for all eternity.

MEDITATION FOR THE OCTAVE OF THE HOLY  
SACRAMENT.

*Of the devotion with which we ought to receive the Holy  
Sacrament, to derive consolation from it.*

“Sub umbrâ illius quem desideraveram, sedi, et fructus ejus  
dulcis gutturi meo.”

“I sat down under His shadow whom I desired, and His fruit  
was sweet to my palate.”—Cant. ii. 3.

## FIRST POINT.

Consider that, in order to derive consolation from the Holy Sacrament, you must have devotion, which consists in three different acts, distinguished by the Spouse in the text above quoted.

The first is the desire with which it must be approached. “I sat down,” she says, “under His shadow whom I desired.” The shadow of that beautiful tree, whose fruit is so sweet, is the Holy Sacrament, which is a mystery of the Faith, beneath which Jesus Christ hides His immortal light. We must desire this sweet fruit before we can enjoy it. It was commanded by the law that the Paschal lamb should be eaten with avidity. Ye shall eat it in haste, as persons who are urged by hunger. Let no man come hither, says St. Chrysostom, who is faint-hearted, lukewarm, and dull; but come with all fervour, as the thirsting stag runs to the fountain, as one who hungers to his food, as one who is frozen to the fire; as the infant seeks

the breast of its nurse, and fastens its eyes upon her bosom to suck down its sweetness. Imitate the divine Bride who begins her discourse with her divine Spouse by expressing the ardour of her desires: "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth."\* Enter into the feelings of the patriarchs of old in limbo, who sighed after the advent of the Messiah. "Haste Thee, O Lord, and come to deliver us." Endeavour to respond to that desire which our Lord testified on the day of the Last Supper, when He said to His Apostles: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer."†

Suffer me, O my Saviour, to take all the desires which Thou ever hadst of giving Thyself to us, and present them to Thy heavenly Father to make up for my languor. O that I could have the sighs, the tears, and the longings of Thine apostles and disciples, and above all of Thy holy Mother, to correspond in some sort to Thine! How willingly would I offer them up to Thee, and esteem myself happy in being able to say with the prophet, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God. For the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself, where she may place her young. Thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House, O Lord," and who eat Thy bread; "they shall praise Thee for ever and ever."‡

\* Cant. i. 2.

† Luke xxii. 15.

‡ Psalm 83.

## SECOND POINT.

Consider the attention, the recollection, the elevation of mind which you ought to have in communicating. This is the second act of devotion which is required in order to derive profit from it. You must not allow your mind to wander about here and there, but keep it calm, and like the Bride in the Canticles place it in a position of repose. The perfumed incense which burns before the altar rises up straight towards heaven, without being tossed about by the wind; and so ought your prayer to go up straight to God without its being dissipated by distractions. "Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight."\*

When Abraham wished to do sacrifice, he left his servants at the foot of the mountain. Moses went alone to the top of Sinai, and commanded the people to remain below. The high priest entered alone into the sanctuary to offer incense. In like manner, when you go to receive the holy Sacrament, or to offer sacrifice, you ought to lift yourself up by contemplation, and leave all earthly thoughts below. The Son of God revealed Himself in the vision of Ezekiel as a man having the appearance of amber, teaching us that, as amber attracts straw, so His design in the Eucharist is to elevate our minds, and attract them to Himself by the participation of His Body. The wonderful and terrible sacrifice of the altar leads us to do this; and obliges us to soar upwards to heaven, or rather above the heavens, with eagles' wings. For, according to our Lord's words, "Where-soever the Body shall be, there shall the eagles

\* Psalm cxl. 2.

also be gathered together." He calls those who communicate eagles, to show that whoever approached the altar to receive His Body should lift himself up on high, and have nothing of earth in his heart, and not suffer himself to be attracted by base things, but mount up towards heaven, with his eyes fixed upon the Sun of Justice. On this account it is that the priest elevates the Host, and pronounces those words in the preface, "*Sursum corda*," as if he said, "Keep your minds in awe and reverence at the tremendous moment of the elevation of the Host." For every one lifts up his heart to the Lord, according to the affection and application of mind with which he then assists at the sacrifice.

### THIRD POINT.

Consider the third act of devotion which you ought to exercise at the time of communion, which is an emotion of heart accompanied by two deep feelings, the one of sorrow and the other of joy. Love ought to make you feel joy in the presence of Jesus Christ, and contrition ought to make you feel sorrow at the view of your own sins: both together will produce in you that fruit of sweetness which the Spouse speaks of, and which the Son of God reserves for those who love Him, and fear to offend Him.

St. Clement of Alexandria compares the Son of God in this Sacrament to the bee, which, having gathered the purest juices from the flowers, afterwards changes them into honey, and gives them back to us, together with the wax in which she has enclosed them. So, he says, the Son of God, having taken the flower of

His Humanity in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, changes it into a food sweeter than honey, which He conceals beneath the whiteness of the species of bread, and those who ardently desire that He should take possession of their hearts, He makes to taste its surpassing sweetness.

But if you would experience this, you must also, as St. Francis of Sales says, yourself have the qualities of the bee. She is pure, and chaste, and virginal; she is laborious, she extracts honey out of flowers, and especially out of the bitter thyme. Love, therefore, purity and labour, mortification and virtuous practices, and then these words of St. Augustin may be addressed to you, "Suck, and drink this delicious drink, whose sweetness is ineffable. Plunge yourself into this fountain of true pleasure, and fill your heart with joy. It is an inexhaustible spring, and will never fail you, unless you yourself take a disgust against it. Preserve your taste for it eternally, and you will be eternally happy.

O Jesus, whose goodness and sweetness are infinite, have mercy upon me! I am covered with confusion to see with what coldness I approach Thy altar and Thy holy table. I blush within myself, because I do not feel that fervour and attraction which so many holy souls have experienced, who being transported with the desire of communion, and by the sensations of love which burnt within their hearts, have not been able to restrain the testimony of their tears. So burning was their thirst, that it made them keep open the mouth both of their heart and of their body to receive Thee as a fountain of living water; and they could not in any other way appease the hunger which oppressed them, than by receiving Thy sacred Body



with a spiritual avidity and a ravishing delight. Alas! how far am I from having a like devotion and like movements of ardour and of love.

O my God, Thou dost repair the weaknesses of man, and distribute to him inward consolations. If I am not permitted to draw out of the fulness of this fountain, at least let me apply my lips to the channel through which these divine waters flow, that I may drink some few drops to quench my thirst, and that I may not altogether faint.

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH.

O my Saviour and my God, grant me this favour, that, in proportion as I approach nearer to this sacred mystery, I may feel the motions of devotion and piety increasing more and more within me.

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#### DISCOURSE FOR THE FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*The Son of God in the Holy Sacrament is the refuge of sinners, He offers Himself for them to the divine justice, and obtains grace for them, that they may reconcile themselves to God, and appease His wrath.*

“Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.”

“Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”—Matt. xi. 28.

All nations with justice pay homage to the divine Eucharist, because it is an universal benefit, extending to all conditions of men, and giving to the world its highest perfection. It

establishes the empire of Jesus Christ upon an atom, it carries all that is really substantial under feeble accidents, and all spiritual light under clouds and shadows.

All the Church militant is built on this foundation stone ; and as all the laws which it prescribes are laws of love, the duties and exercises which it practices duties of love, its happiness the enjoyment of love, the God whom it adores the God of love, so also the foundation which sustains and upholds it is a mystery of love.

All the Church suffering receives its influences ; and although it is left in darkness by the absence of this Sun of Justice, still it is from Him that the imprisoned souls who are purified in the fire of God's justice derive the grace which animates them, the strength which supports them, the consolation which soothes their torments, and the favour which terminates them. In the same manner the light of the visible sun causes the stars to shine above our heads, although it be hidden during the night beneath our feet.

All the Church triumphant is nourished by this heavenly food, which it eats without any Sacramental veils ; the joy of all the nations of the world, who come hither as to the centre of their rest, is founded on the light of glory ; glory is founded upon love, love upon grace, grace on the Sacrament of the altar, which is its original source.

Finally, all the dominions of the Son of Man and all the riches of His kingdom depend upon this Eucharistic treasure, and I venture to say, that if there was no Sacrament there would be no faith, for this is the Sun which enlightens faith ; no hope, for this is the stay which supports it ; no love, for this is the furnace which

kindles it; no religion, for this is the victim which it sacrifices; no martyrs, for this is the Blood which animates their courage; no virgins, for this is the wine which produces them; no confessors, for this is the mystery which sanctifies them; no predestinated souls, for this is the food which nourishes them. St. Cyprian says that penitents regard the Eucharist as the haven of their hopes; those who begin a new life look upon it as the milk of their spiritual childhood; virtuous persons as their strength; perfect men as the first fruits of their beatitude; the afflicted as their refuge; the sick as their remedy; dying men as the seed of their resurrection and the root of their immortality.

Only the sinner under God's displeasure is in so wretched a condition that he is unworthy to approach the divine mysteries. The Holy Sacrament is only for the living, and he is among the dead; it is a banquet for God's friends, and he is among His enemies; it is the bread of angels, and he is a slave to devils; it is the paradise of the earth, and he carries a hell in his conscience, a hell whose punishment is to be deprived of the Body of Jesus Christ, as the punishment of hell itself is to be deprived of His Divinity.

Still, if the sinner is so unhappy as to be cut off from the communion of the faithful, whilst he continues in his sin, there still remains to him the consolation of assisting at the sacrifice. If he cannot receive the Sacrament, he can at least adore it; if he cannot receive it as his food, he can use it as a shield to cover him from the arrows of God's justice. This will form the subject of the following discourse, in which it will be shown that the Saviour of our souls is in this divine Sacrament as an innocent and

peaceful victim, who appeases the wrath of God against sinners, as He did upon the cross ; first, by winning back for Him the heart of His rebellious children ; secondly, by re-establishing His empire ; thirdly, by repairing the honour and glory which had been ravished from Him ; and, finally, by taking the place of the sinner, and doing for him out of love what he was bound in justice to accomplish himself.

## SECTION I.

I say, in the first place, that he appeases the anger of His Father by winning back for Him the heart of sinners, and obliging them to pay Him the love they owe to Him. The anger of God is compared to that of a lion, because the anger of a lion proceeds from an excessive heat, which causes a continual fever, and the anger of God proceeds from His excessive desire to make Himself beloved, feared, and obeyed by His creatures. Since, therefore, the first thing he demands of us is our love, one refusal to perform this our bounden duty causes Him infinite pain. There are two chief centres in which God delights to dwell : the first is in Himself, in the infinity of His own Being, and in the glorious attributes of His Divinity ; the second is in the heart of man. "I am in My Father, and My Father in Me." This is the first place of His abode. "If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him."\* This is the second place. In the first He enjoys a perfect repose, which cannot be disturbed. He knows Himself perfectly, and from His knowledge He loves Himself with a

\* John xiv. 23.

supreme love ; loving Himself, He is possessed with unspeakable joy, and in the possession He finds, as St. Ambrose says, a repose unchangeable, an uncreated peace, which is on that very account incapable of alteration, for since there is no principle superior to itself which produced it, so there is none which can disturb it. St. Thomas calls it an infinite peace, which, consequently, has nothing to cross it, for contrariety can only be found between two different natures, and where there is a diversity of opposite natures there are bounds and limits which separate them. Theologians say that this divine repose is active and passive, because He both gives and possesses peace : He gives peace to His creatures, because the repose of which they are capable is nothing else than the end of their motion, and God Himself is the end of the motion of all creatures : He possesses peace, because He has in Himself the plenitude of its being. There is this difference between the repose which He gives and that which He possesses, that the one is the end of motion, and the other is the immoveable principle which gives motion to all things. The rest of creatures is the fruit of their labour, and the rest of God is dependent upon His own nature. The rest of creatures presupposes motion ; the rest of God excludes the idea of motion as regards Himself, and as regards all that is not God, it is the term and end of motion.

Tranquillity, therefore, reigns supreme in this first place of His abode ; but it is not so in the second, which is the heart of man. In this there is always change ; and though God alone has a right to inhabit it, He is often driven out unworthily from His own house. He is led by inclination to come into it, and He remains in it

with pleasure ; but when He is obliged to leave it, He is ejected by violence, and this is the cause of His anger. When the lightning is assaulted by its adversary in the bosom of the clouds, it is constrained to escape from its abode, and it departs amidst storm and tempest. God is a consuming fire, and the heart of man is its centre. When He is attacked by sin, which is hateful to Him, and when His mortal enemy usurps His place, what can we expect from Him but a just indignation, which causes the lightnings of His wrath to burst forth? Has He not good cause to be offended? Do you think He is indifferent about the loss of a soul for which He has paid the price of His own Blood, in which He has lodged such treasures, and after He has beautified it by His grace, adorned it with virtues, and enriched it with His gifts?

And what other method can there be of appeasing His wrath, except by regaining the rebellious heart, and bringing it back to its duty? And what can accomplish this but the precious Blood of the Lamb, which, when it was shed upon Mount Calvary, rent the rocks, and opened the sepulchres of the dead? If the Roman emperors, by merely attaching a strip of purple to a house which they desired to occupy, took possession of it so that no person ventured to dispute their claim, who can refuse to the Son of God possession of his heart when he sees the royal purple of His Humanity, which He presents to us in asking admittance? When St. Augustine received the Donatists into the communion of the Church, he looked upon their souls as the temple of the Son of God, which they had profaned by their errors, and he said to them with words of the gentlest compassion :

“O miserable house! recognize Him whose arms you bear; you bear the arms of Jesus Christ: do not give yourself up as a prey to Donatus.”

O sinner! do you not sometimes hear in the depth of your soul, when the priest elevates the Host, or the Church exposes it upon her altars, the voice of that adorable Blood? O wretched habitation, miserable harbour of devils! will you not recognize your true Master? Act as you will. Here is your Saviour, upon Whom depends your eternal happiness and salvation. So long as you are deprived of His love, and cut off from the communion of His Body, you will be always miserable. O wretched habitation, which bears the arms of Jesus Christ, do not give yourself over to the devil, who longs for your ruin and eternal misery! Certainly, the presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament is a powerful engine to crush the heart of the sinner; and it does not astonish me that when St. Bernard held it in his hands, and showed it to the Duke of Aquitaine in the midst of his furious anger, it struck him to the ground, and, instead of a cruel persecutor, converted him into a sincere penitent. The devils themselves tremble before Him, and, in spite of their rage and obstinacy, are compelled to render Him obedience.

## SECTION II.

Let us now regard this truth in a different light, and see how the Saviour of the world in the Holy Sacrament appeases the anger of God by repairing His honour. God has two possessions of which He is extremely jealous, His beatitude and His glory. His beatitude is an

inward possession, His glory is an external one: God has need of no man for His own happiness, because He has it in Himself and by Himself. To be revered and honoured He requires His creatures, because honour and reverence come from without, and depend upon the esteem and willingness of him who pays them. Hence it is that His beatitude cannot increase, because it is infinite, or diminish, because it is immovable; but His glory is capable of increase or diminution, because it depends on the free will of the creature, who may pay Him less or more. On this account he works externally, not to increase His own power, but to make it known; not to elevate His greatness, but to impress on us the sense of it; not to acquire new light or wisdom, but to diffuse it over His works: so that man, being ravished by their beauty, may elevate himself to the knowledge and love of their Author. It is, therefore, in the power of man to increase the glory of God in proportion to his sense of His greatness, which he testifies by a religious service and by a reverent submission. But he can also diminish God's glory, and by this means provoke His anger. It is not in the power of a sinner to affect the beatitude of his Creator, but he may deprive Him of the honour which is justly due to Him; he cannot weaken His power, but he may despise it; he cannot take away His goodness, but he may disavow it; he cannot obscure His wisdom, but he may close his eyes, lest it should enlighten him. This contempt, ingratitude, and thanklessness is man's sin, and the cause of God's wrath. This offence raises the indignation of God, and His indignation brings punishment upon the head of the guilty. Thus



it is that God's anger is provoked, and it remains to see how it is appeased.

The sinner provokes God by the insolent contempt of His perfections; and the Saviour of the world appeases His wrath, because He does much more than repair this wrong: for there exists nothing in heaven or earth which does such honour to God and exhibits so clearly His goodness, wisdom, and power, with all His infinite attributes, as the adorable Sacrament of the altar.

The world is a beautiful mirror of God's greatness, showing forth His power in the production of created beings, His wisdom in their preservation, His providence in their conduct, His love in their harmony, His goodness in their perfections, His eternity in their duration, His immensity in their multitude and extent.

Still more fair and bright is the mirror of a soul in a state of grace; and if we have sufficient faith, we shall find greater cause for admiring the greatness of God in the conduct of one single good man, than in all the richest portions of the universe.

More perfect and excellent still is the mirror of a glorified soul, because it is on such that God puts the last touches of His own image, which in the blessed is of a brightness so dazzling, that He does not hesitate to call them Gods.

But the Holy Sacrament is far above all these, as the sun exceeds in brightness the stars which fade away in its presence.

Assemble together all that the universe contains, including all the wonders of nature, of grace, and of glory; still God is only found in these by participation: but in the holy Sacrament He exists in His own substance. In the

world I see only streamlets, but here is the ocean and the source of His blessings; there are the rays, but here is the sun itself; there are only parts, but here is the whole.

In the world I do not see a thousandth part of His perfections; for He can make a thousand worlds more vast than the one I now behold; but He can create nothing greater than what I worship in the divine mysteries. Lastly, the world discovers to me many of God's perfections; but it gives me no power to love them; whereas the Holy Sacrament gives me both light and love, both knowledge and acknowledgment: and to crown my happiness, whilst I make use of this mirror to perceive the goodness of God, it serves me also as a sacrifice to testify my love: for I cannot honour God more highly, than by offering to Him this Victim, by sacrificing a God in adoration of a God.

Nay, more than this; God Himself cannot procure Himself any greater glory, than that which He receives from His Son in this state. He is able to glorify Himself by knowledge and by love, but He cannot do so by submission, because submission pre-supposes inferiority in the person who submits. A reasonable creature may glorify God by knowledge, by love, and by submission; but the creature can never equal the merit and excellence of the object of its adoration, for there is no proportion between finite and infinite. It is Jesus Christ alone Who being both God and man, and uniting in the Holy Sacrament the submission of the creature with the greatness of the Divinity, pays to His Father's infinite perfections the honour and reverence of which they are worthy. The Fathers say that in this mystery He descends to the extreme degree of self-abasement. Cer-

tainly, in the Incarnation His humiliation is wonderful, for He humbled Himself even to taking the form of a man, of a sinner, of a criminal, even to the death of the Cross: but in the Holy Sacrament He seems to descend lower still. In the Incarnation He united Himself to His adorable Humanity, which is the chief work of the Holy Spirit; but by transubstantiation He joins Himself to the accidents of bread. In the one He took the likeness of a sinner, in the other He enters into the sinner's heart. In the one, He descended once only, here, almost at every hour and moment. Formerly He shut up His immensity within the measure of His Body, but now it is confined beyond all measure, and His Body is deprived of its natural extension, and is, as it were, without dimensions. But, at the same time that His Body loses its natural measure, He exhibits the extreme measure of His abasement, which comprises all the rest, because to measure in separate parts the humility of the Son of God, we must show the distance between God and man, by this we measure the humility of His Birth; then again, the distance between God and the condition of a servant, which is the measure of His suffering life; between God and death, which is the measure of His Cross and Tomb. But to estimate all at once by this last humiliation, we must see the place which He here takes, which is that of a sinner, of a servant, and of death all at once. For when He is a victim on the altar, who does not see that the victim occupies the place of him for whom it is sacrificed? Now for whom is this innocent victim offered? Is it not for sinners and for slaves, for the living and the dead? And whilst He holds the place of sinners, does He not do out of His love for them,

what in justice they ought to do themselves to appease the wrath of God?

## SECTION III.

This last consideration joined to the preceding ones, shows our need of the sacrifice of the altar; for although all the satisfactions which sinners can offer to the divine justice, are necessary as remedies, still, because of the unworthiness of the sinner, they are without any sufficiency or efficacy to that end. Jesus Christ alone can make satisfaction for us, and therefore it is that He daily descends upon the altar, as a propitiatory victim, to repair the offences we commit, and which we cannot ourselves efface. Let us here admire the excess of His goodness, which has found a means of supplying our weakness. The sinner offends God by pride, and therefore must appease His anger by acts of profound humility. The Son of God takes his place, and puts Himself in a state of humiliation which will endure to the end of the world.

The sinner offends God by indulging in pleasure; for every sin is conceived by pleasure, formed by consent, and brought forth by works. He must therefore appease Him by pain, and prevent the punishment he deserves by a voluntary chastisement; for God never punishes any sin twice over; and when He sees the penitent clothed in a hair-shirt, He is too kind to heap evil upon evil. The Son of God therefore, Who never committed any sin, takes in his stead the place of a penitent. He covers Himself with the species as with a hair-shirt or sackcloth. He deprives Himself of the use of His senses, to avenge the license with which we have abused our senses. He shuts Himself up within the

Host, as in a prison of love, that He may break the chains of our servitude.

The sinner offends God by his presumption, and trusts to the mercy of God, to the contempt of His justice. He must therefore appease Him by his fear of the divine judgments, and tremble with a holy dread, that he may stay the course of His vengeance, as we see that the storm passes over the reed which bend under the violence of the blast, whilst it tears up the oaks that resist it. The Son of God takes his place, and puts Himself in a position of reverence to adore the Majesty of His Father. He pays homage to His greatness, He trembles, as it were, not for Himself, but for His redeemed; and if in ordinary cases, it is the hand which exposes itself to protect the head, and the heart which trembles for it, here it is our Head who exposes Himself for His members, and trembles for His heart.

The sinner offends God by his hatred: for all sin has two faces, the one of hatred the other of love; one expressive of aversion, the other of attachment; one of pursuit, the other of flight. Sin attaches itself to the creature, and withdraws from the Creator, it pursues the former and flies away from the latter, it loves falsehood and hates truth. He must therefore appease God by a loving return and a voluntary conversion; he must love what he before detested, and detest what he before loved. The Son of God takes his place. He makes of the Holy Sacrament a furnace of love, and sets His Own Heart in a flame, that He may consume the bonds which bind us down, and burn up our crimes, by which the wrath of His Father had been kindled.

Finally, whatever the sinner may do, he must

have recourse to God's mercy, seeing that he cannot make satisfaction to His justice; he must pray for pardon since he can never deserve it. The Son of God takes his place. In the Holy Sacrament He is in the form of a suppliant; and though He is deprived of the power of speaking, He does not abandon the use of prayer. All that is in Him speaks in behalf of the sinner. His Heart, His Hands, His Head, His Wounds, raise a piteous cry imploring the pardon of our offences. He still does upon the altar what He once did upon the cross. He prays for His enemies; and if He does not shed His Blood upon the earth, He pours it out upon our hearts, which are harder than the rocks of earth. If He does not any more gain merits, He imparts His merits to us; if He is not in a condition capable of suffering, He applies to us the fruit of His sufferings; and finally, if He cannot any more die for us, He offers His death as a sacrifice to His Father, a sacrifice in no respect inferior to the one He offered upon Calvary; for here is the same Victim, the same Heart, the same love, and consequently the same power to appease God's wrath and satisfy His justice. O my beloved Saviour, what do we owe to Thee for having opened this refuge for us! Alas! who could stay the course of the divine vengeance amidst so much of sin and disorder, unless the Blood of the Lamb of God cried out for mercy? Who could save us from the deluge, unless this sacred heart was thrown open to us to save us from shipwreck?

O eternal Father, look upon the Face of Thy Son. It is true that we are full of pride and vanity; but His humility throws a cloak over our frowardness and presumption. We are ungrateful, but he satisfies for our ingratitude.

If our sins are great, His satisfaction is greater. If our demerits are exceeding, His merits are infinite. If the voice of our sins demands vengeance, the voice of His Blood cries aloud for mercy. Turn away Thine eyes from our sins, and look upon His Wounds and Sufferings, and out of love to Thy Son forgive those for whom He has sacrificed all that He had, even to life itself.

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MEDITATION FOR THE FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE  
OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*The all-powerful attractions of Jesus Christ for gaining the  
heart of a Sinner.*

“Ecce qui elongant se a te, peribunt: perdidisti omnes qui fornicantur abs te. Mihi autem adhærere Deo bonum est; ponere in Domino Deo spem meam.”

“Behold they that go far from Thee shall perish: Thou hast destroyed all them that are disloyal to Thee. But it is good for me to adhere to my God, and to put my hope in the Lord God.”—Ps. lxxii. 27, 28.

FIRST POINT.

WHY do you delay to give yourself up entirely to Jesus Christ, and to love Him with all your heart, when He alone has all the qualities of a perfect friend? Weigh well the following truths which oblige you to take this most important resolution.

A perfect friend must be supremely good, and have infinite attractions, because he ought to drain all the love out of your heart whose desires are infinite. Now where can you find this sove-

reign goodness but in Jesus Christ? Who is there except Him that can say to you: I will show you all good things?—Where else but in the Holy Sacrament, which is the wheat of the elect and the wine which produces virgins, can you find all the good things of the earth assembled together? If Jesus Christ is our sole good, ought not our heart to be all inflamed with the desire of Him? It is doing Him wrong to divide our affections so ill, and give Him so small a share of them, when He gives His whole self to us.

## SECOND POINT.

A perfect friend ought to be all-powerful, because he should be able to assure your mind against the fear of any evil which may befall you, so that you may give yourself up to him without reserve, and place entire confidence in him. Go then and seek amongst men any other friend than Jesus Christ, on whom you can repose without danger of deception. Who besides Him can inspire you with so perfect a confidence that you could say to him: "I will fear no evils for thou art with me?"\*

## THIRD POINT.

A perfect friend must have great sweetness of disposition and facility to forgive, otherwise you will quickly lose his friendship. But who has the gentleness and patience of Jesus Christ? If His mercy were not infinite; how should I venture to say with the prophet: "for Thy name's sake, O Lord, Thou wilt pardon my sin, for it is great."†

\* Psalm xxii. 4.

† Psalm xxiv. 11.



## FOURTH POINT.

A perfect friend ought to have sufficient knowledge to be able to foresee all the evil accidents which may occur to afflict his friend, so that he may secure him against them. But who is there except the incarnate Wisdom of God, that is able to penetrate so deep into the future? Thou dost prevent all the miseries by which I am surrounded. Alas! without Thee what could I do in the midst of so many perils, amongst which I am hopelessly lost? Thou art my guardian, and I may exclaim with all the fervour of my soul, "I sleep, and my heart watcheth."\* I sleep in confident reliance on Thy care, for Thou hast Thine eyes always open upon Thy poor creature.

## FIFTH POINT.

A perfect friend ought to be faithful, that he may be a refuge and defence to him who puts his trust in him. But in whom can we trust except in Thee, O Lord, who art faithfulness itself, and who givest bliss to all that hope in Thee?

## SIXTH POINT.

A perfect friend should be affable and easy of access; for the presence and familiar conversation of a friend is a great solace. But where can you find more condescension and familiarity than in Him who says, that His delight is to be with the sons of men, and who enters into their very hearts that He may converse more familiarly with them?

\* Cant. v. 2.

## SEVENTH POINT.

Finally, the favour of a perfect friend ought to be so valuable and excellent, as entirely to satisfy your desires; for when you have given yourself up wholly to him, you would not be content if you did not find everything in his friendship. Now in the same manner that all virtue and holiness consist in loving Jesus Christ, so all your happiness consists in being loved by Him in turn, and in possessing His Heart as He possesses yours.

When you have seriously pondered all these truths, say with St. Augustine, "Lord, who will grant me the favour of resting in Thee? Who will grant me this favour, that I may enter into Thy Heart, and be intoxicated with the heavenly wine of Thy love, so that I may lose all memory of my ills, and may embrace Thee with all the powers of my soul, as my one only good?" What art Thou to me, O my God? And what am I, O Lord, that Thou honourest me with the sweet command of loving Thee, and that Thou canst not suffer me to fail in this command, without being moved to anger against me, and threatening me with endless misery? Ah, Lord, is it not misery enough not to love Thee? I conjure Thee, O my God, by Thy mercy to say that 'Thou art mine. Say to my soul, "I am Thy salvation," and speak the word, so that I may hear it. I keep my ears attentive in Thy presence to hear this blessed word. Open my ears, O Lord, and say to my soul, I am Thy salvation. So shall I hasten to Thy Voice, and when I have found Thee, I will cling to Thee so closely, that I shall never leave Thee.

DISCOURSE FOR THE SATURDAY AFTER THE  
OCTAVE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*The Son of God asks only for our heart, in gratitude for all the benefits He bestows upon us in the Holy Sacrament.*

“Præbe, Fili mi, cor tuum mihi.”

“My Son, give me thy heart.”—Prov. xxiii. 26.

It is not enough that we receive, we must render in return. One of the sweetest feelings of a really faithful soul, is that of gratitude; and as there is nothing so liberal as the love which dwells in the heart of God, so there is nothing so full of gratitude as this same love when it resides in the heart of a creature. But what return can our gratitude render to God for all the benefits we receive in the holy Sacrament? St. Bernard gives an excellent answer to this question; he says that there is no gift so worthy of the Christian, as the offering of his heart to Him who is the maker of it.

It is very worthy of our consideration, that God, whose hands are like two inexhaustible fountains pouring out their abundance upon His creatures, never ceases crying aloud to man, and beseeching him, as if he could not do without him. What is it that He asks of him? it is his heart. “My son, give me thy heart.” It appears as if the spiritual life were nothing else than the intercourse of God with the soul, and the soul with its God; God asking of the

soul its heart, and the soul giving its heart to God. God says to the predestinated soul, Prepare your heart for the Lord, dispose yourself to follow the traces of my providence, make yourself capable of receiving my favours. And the soul makes answer to God, "My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready,"\* in comfort and in desolation, in prosperity and adversity, in rough paths and in smooth, my heart is ready to follow Thee. God says to the predestinated soul, "Turn unto me with all thy heart," leave all the pleasures of the earth, because you have the joys of heaven, quit the love of creatures, because you have the Creator. And the predestinated soul makes answer to God: I will turn unto Thee, O Lord, with all my heart, I will confess at the same time Thy goodness and my own wickedness, Thy benefits and my ingratitude, Thy mercies and my wretchedness. God says to the predestinated soul, "wash thy heart from wickedness, O Jerusalem, that thou mayest be saved,"† because my love is all pure, my grace is pure, my spirit is pure. And the soul replies to God, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord."‡ O God, Thou living fountain of purity, wash my heart in Thy Blood, and purify it in the flames of Thy burning charity. God says to the predestinated soul, "the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."§ Station peace at the entrance of thy heart, as the cherubim were placed at the gates of the garden of Eden, to guard every avenue of approach, and banish everything which may disturb its repose, which surpasses all the pleasures of sense. And the soul answers God, "If armies in camp should

\* Psalm lvi. 8.

† Jeremiah iv. 14.

‡ Psalm l. 12.

§ Phil. iv. 7.

stand together against me, my heart shall not fear.”\* If the thunderbolts of heaven were to fall upon my head, and the air around me was to glare with lightning, if the earth were to cleave under my feet, and all creation combine for my destruction, yet would not my heart be troubled. I fear no enemy who attacks me from without, having God within me as my protector and defender.

Wherefore all these questions and answers, this connection and intercourse, these wooings and loving advances? Does the Son of God stand in need of any thing? and if He is in want, is the heart of man sufficient to supply His need? What treasure do we hide under this little heap of earth, that God is so jealous of it? This is what we propose to examine in the following discourse, so that after having considered the reasons which induce Him to make this demand of our hearts, and which oblige us to surrender them up to Him, we may the more readily gratify His wishes and yield to His desires. There are two chief reasons, the first is, that there is nothing which is more our own and more proper for us to give than our heart; the second, that there is nothing which belongs more entirely to God, and which He can claim with greater justice.

## SECTION I.

*We have nothing which is more our own, and which is more fitting for us to give, than our heart.*

The truth of this is evident, for it is the heart which makes us master of ourselves, on which account St. Bernard says, that whoever is in

\* Psalm xxvi. 3.

possession of his own heart is lord of a great kingdom, seeing that he is master of his own actions, and the conduct of his own life. Now there is nothing which can be said to belong to us so much as ourselves. And again, as the heart is the most valuable of all our goods, it is also the best of all gifts, it renders all our offerings acceptable, and is itself only made for giving away. I say first of all, that it is made only for giving away, because it is made only for loving. The nature of the human heart, says the angelic doctor, is intimately connected with the motions of love. The Son of God when He formed it in His hands, clearly showed that He wished it to be the seat of divine charity, so plainly has He expressed its qualities in the structure of this organ. The heart is of the colour of vermillion and of a fiery hue; and divine love is ardent in its nature, and glowing like the flames of Paradise. The heart is small in bulk, but great in power; and the love of God is humble in appearance, and abases itself with pleasure at the feet of all the world, but it is full of strength, because it is triumphant over the justice of God. The heart is narrow at its base, and broad above like an inverted pyramid, which touches the earth only with its point, and has its foundations turned upwards to heaven; thus divine love is straitened as it regards creatures, it does not creep in the dust, but it extends its affections and desires in proportion as it elevates itself towards eternity. The heart is always in action, its motion is its life, rest is the cause of its death and destruction; in like manner divine love is never idle, it advances continually from sin to grace, from lukewarmness to fervour, from darkness to light, from heaven to earth. The heart opens and shuts with an alternate motion,

one of which draws in the air and the other expels it, both together serving to moderate its heat; divine love also has two similar movements, it opens itself to the light of the Holy Spirit, and closes itself against all impressions from the spirit of darkness; it opens at the approach of its Creator, and closes itself against the approach of creatures; it opens to the truth which feeds it, and shuts out vanity which poisons and kills it. The heart is formed of a firm and solid substance, that it may resist those tender affections of joy, which might soften it by their excess; and divine love is strong and noble, and does not suffer itself to be corrupted by the false pleasures of the world. The interior of the heart is hollow, and divine love is void of all created things. The heart cannot be cut without its causing death, and divine love cannot be divided without its flame being extinguished. These real connections and exact correspondences, prove clearly enough that man's heart was only made for the love of God, and consequently made only that we might give it to Him. It is the nature of love to be prodigal, it gives away all that it has, and when it has exhausted its treasures, it gives away itself and makes over all to its beloved. Hence theologians say that the Holy Spirit is a gift by the very property of His person, because He is the heart of the Father and of the Son; again, love is the life of the heart, and the property of love is to give. If, therefore, the heart of God is a gift given wholly and entirely to man, is it anything more than just that the heart of man should in exchange be all for God?

I said, in the second place, that the heart makes all our presents acceptable. A servant does not please his master, if he does not serve

heartily; a friend does not please us, unless he is frank and cordial; a benefactor does not oblige, if his kind deeds do not proceed from the heart. So also God does not accept favourably our services, if they do not proceed from the heart. This is the balance of the sanctuary, by which He desires that all our offerings should be weighed. He does not so much consider what it is that we offer, as the heart with which we offer it; and it is with justice that we are accustomed to estimate the price and merit of all our actions, by a reference to our inward affection and good will, and that we count as nothing all that does not spring from a principle of charity. God will not suffer us to offer to Him the sacrifice of Cain, who gave only a part of his goods, and as St. Augustine says, kept back his heart and his will. This division, says Rupert, displeased Him, and if we must share our offering with God, He would freely leave us all the rest, provided He could gain our hearts. Some content themselves with offering their riches, by founding churches and hospitals, others sacrifice their bodies, exhausting their strength in watchings, fastings, austerities, and mortifications. These offerings are not evil, they are on the contrary, precious and praiseworthy, but still they are not the most perfect. I desire, says St. Augustine, something more excellent. God has no need of your goods, your fasts and mortifications are not necessary to Him, but He is jealous for your heart. "Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck."\* St. Anselm says very beautifully in one of his fervent meditations, "Take away my riches from

\* Cant. iv. 9.



me, if it seem good to Thee, O Lord, and my feet, and hands, and eyes, provided Thou leavest me but a heart to love Thee, for whilst this remains to me I am certain to please Thee."

Lastly, I said that the heart is the chiefest of all gifts, and consequently the measure and rule of all other gifts. We give because we love, and we give only in so far as we love. The first present which God makes us, is not the life which we hold from Him, far less the riches He bestows, neither is it even the care and the grace with which He prevents us, that we may start in the path of glory. He has laid us under obligations long before this, by giving us His own self; He gave Himself to us, in giving us His heart; He gave us His heart, by loving us with the same love with which He loved Himself from all eternity. This is the source of His gifts, the origin of His favours, the root of His benefits, and the eternal principle of those graces which He dispenses to mankind in time. Since, therefore, love can only be rewarded by love, is it not reasonable, that before all other things you present your heart to Him, and that this should be the first offering of your gratitude, seeing that it is the first of His benefits?

Certainly an offering of the first fruits of anything, is always the most fitting and acceptable. Nothing can be more beautiful than flowers, and these are first productions of the year. Nothing can be sweeter than the drops of dew which fall in the morning like liquid pearls, and these are the first fruits of the day. Nothing can be more lovely than the early years of youth, and these are the first fruits of life. For this reason it is that in the Old Testament God reserved the first fruits of the earth to be offered to Him

in sacrifice, "All the first-born are mine."\* I reserve them to myself, and demand them as a homage to my sovereign dominion. It is My will that the first-born of animals be offered to Me, because I gave them their life. It is My will that all the first-fruits of the earth be offered to Me, because it is I that make the earth to bring forth fruit. I desire that the first-born in every family shall be offered to Me, because this is a tribute which I levy upon my people. Now a man's heart is, as it were, his first-born, the first that lives, and the last that dies. We must therefore consecrate our heart to God, for it is most fitting that what first receives the movement of life within us, should acknowledge the source of its being, and surrender itself to the principle of its life.

Let us now elevate ourselves from nature to grace, and affirm that the heart is not only the first-born in the bodily life, but also in the spiritual life. When God desires to accomplish any work, He always commences within, whilst the art of man on the contrary confines itself to the surface. Divine art works upon more elevated principles, because it studies to please the eyes of God, which penetrate into the essence and foundation of things, and therefore it operates internally, whereas human art works only to content the eyes of men, who can only see what is without. This is seen not only in the external structure of the heart, as we have before shown, but also in the sanctification of the soul, which commences always with the heart. It is here that the virtues are born, as also it is from hence that the vices derive their origin. Humility begins in the heart, so also does obedience and purity; in a word, the life of a soul which

\* Exodus xiii. 2.

surrenders itself up entirely to God, begins from the heart, all that precedes the act of love, is a disposition preparatory to life, but it is not really life. God terrifies the mind by the fear of the divine judgments, this disposes us for the reception of life, but it is not life itself. He encourages us by the sweetness of hope, and this disposes us to receive life, but it is not the life of the soul. When is it that a man begins to live to Jesus Christ? When he begins to love, or at least when he begins to have charity, which is the principle of love. All the first-born are God's; the heart is the first-born in man, and therefore belongs to God. Man must therefore give it up and make a sacrifice of it. He cannot refuse.

I well know that nothing is more free than the heart, and that if it gives itself up to God, it is with an entire freedom, without any constraint, necessity, or force. Even grace which subjects the heart to its laws, is so ingenious, that she makes herself to be obeyed freely, and will not command us as slaves. But the more honourable it is by this privilege of liberty, who does not see that it is the better adapted for a gift, seeing that a gift is never more pleasing than when it is free and disinterested? Henry VII., king of England, wishing to make war on France, sent his agents through the provinces of his realm, to collect from his subjects, without any constraint, whatever they were willing to give for the support of his troops. This he did after the example of Edward IV. his predecessor, saying that he should know by this means how much he was beloved by his people, and he therefore called these voluntary contributions a tribute of friendship. Such is the tribute of our heart. It is a tribute of friendship which God

does not exact from us by force. He desires to see whether we love Him, and therefore He treats us as He did His people Israel, whom He exhorted to contribute to the building of the tabernacle, without any man being constrained. I do not desire, He said, that any man should give grudgingly; I do not require your goods; I desire that your offerings may be voluntary, and I shall see by this who they are that love Me. This is the reason why, if He entreats us to give Him our heart, if He flatters and caresses us, and tries to win us by His charms, He nevertheless leaves us at liberty, that He may draw from us a free and willing homage; still whilst He gives the liberty of doing what we will, He does not take away from us the obligation of doing what we ought. We may, if we please, refuse Him our love, but we cannot do so without injustice, for free though we be, our hearts belong to God, who has only given them to us, that we may sacrifice them to Him. So that it may be said, that if we consider our own power of giving or refusing, there is nothing which is more our own than our hearts; but if we consider our duty towards God, there is nothing which belongs more justly and strictly to Him. Will you now see the right He has to demand it of you?

## SECTION II.

*There is nothing which belongs to God more than our heart, nor anything which He can more justly demand of us.*

When the Son of God demands our heart, it is not only a tribute of love which He requires, but one of justice; and if we yield it up to Him,

it is not, strictly speaking, a gift which we offer, but rather a restitution, because we only give Him what belongs to Him. It is the chief work of His hands, His dearest conquest, His heritage, a possession which is His by a solemn grant. It is therefore most just that He should be in possession of it, and we cannot without infidelity deprive Him of its empire, because He is at once the founder, the repairer, and the legitimate owner of it, both by the right of His birth, and by His election ; surely these are indisputable titles.

It belongs to Him in virtue of a grant from His Father, and also from ourselves. His Father has allotted to Him the empire over our hearts, and each one of us in particular has done so also. His Father sent Him from heaven, and we have chosen Him on earth to be our sovereign ; and in order to consecrate ourselves entirely to His service, we have renounced for Him, the world, the flesh, and the devil. When we entered at our baptism into His holy house, we were asked, Do you renounce the devil and all the pomps of the world ? It was answered in our name, I renounce them. And since that time we have a hundred times given ourselves up to Him, and a hundred times made Him a sacrifice of ourselves. I will believe that we did this willingly, and that we did not offer Him a victim without a heart. This would have been an act too insulting to His majesty, and too fatal for us ; but supposing even that we have done this, our hearts still do not cease to belong to Him.

They belong to Him by right of birth, because He is born and predestinated to be the Son of God. And if He is the true Son of God, to whom, tell me, does the inheritance belong, but

to the heir of all things? Whose is the wealth of the Father, if it be not the only Son's? To whom belongs the heart of man, but to the Son of the eternal Father, who fashioned it in His hands? Jesus Christ, says the apostle, dwells in us, as a son in the house of his father. And Origen says, perceiving the thought of St. Paul, each one of us, if we be just, is the heir of the eternal Father, and in this capacity, carries Jesus in the midst of his heart.

The heart belongs to Him because it is His chief work, nothing is more truly the property of the workman than his own work. No man deserves to be the governor of a state more than its founder; no man possesses a thing with greater justice, than the maker of it. St. Augustin says, that if an idol had a heart, it would doubtless adore the artificer who made it. Now the heart is God's workmanship, and He has made all its secret springs; and in order that no man may dispute with Him the possession of it, He has in making it stamped it with two signal marks, by which its author may be recognised, viz., capaciousness to contain God, and resemblance of God. Its capacity is boundless, so that it is all for God, and God is all for it. It is always in motion, and knows no rest except by returning to the principle of its being; because He who made it, is alone able to fill it. Its likeness to God is so great and noble, that God loves it above all His works. Amongst all created beings, says St. Bernard, nothing is found more sublime, more noble, more resembling God than the heart, and this is why He asks nothing else from us. The heart is to us, if I may so speak, what God is to the universe. God is the first mover of the world, and the heart is the first instrument of motion to the

body, giving life and motion to all the other members, and receiving nothing from them. God is the principle and end of all the movements of nature, and the heart is the principle and end of all the movements of man ; the principle of motion by its centrifugal power, the end of motion by its centripetal attraction. God subsists in unity of essence and in a trinity of persons ; and the heart, which cannot suffer division, is of a triangular form, thus joining together in its formation, unity and the number three, which is the most perfect of all the numbers, because it is the first which divides itself into an equal and an unequal number, and marks all created things with the stamp of the divinity. Although God produces all things by the unity of His power, which is common to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, He still makes them bear the image of the trinity of persons. There are three hierarchies of angels, and three orders which compose these hierarchies. In the heavens there are three planets above the sun and three below it ; in quantity there are three measures, length, breadth, and depth. There are three different kinds of mixed bodies, stones, plants, and animals ; in plants there are three different parts, the root, the trunk, and the branches ; in animals there are three remarkable orders, those of the air, the sea, and the earth ; but after all, there is nothing among all the works of God which better explains this mystery than the heart, whose three angles correspond to the three powers of the soul ; viz., the memory, the understanding, and the will, forming as it were, three dwellings consecrated to the three divine Persons, the first to the Father, the second to the Son, the third to the Holy Ghost. Thus as beings who resemble each other naturally love

each other, so God loves so dearly the heart of man, that He will not suffer either refusal or partition. He will possess it wholly without reserve, and He has good reason so to require it.

It belongs to Him not only as His chief work, but still more, as His most illustrious conquest, which has cost Him very dear.

"You are not your own,"\* says St. Paul, "for the Son of God has dearly purchased you. He has redeemed you with the price of His own most precious Blood." St. Thomas says that two things are necessary in a Redeemer: He must pay the ransom, and pay it out of His own goods. Now the price of our redemption is the Blood of Jesus Christ, and the life consists in the Blood; this Blood is His own; His Father gave it to Him for our ransom, but He poured it out for us His own self. His Father worked for the restoration of man as the universal cause, but He is the proximate cause, and therefore we belong to Him, because of His particular title of Redeemer, which he shares with none. We are, therefore, properly His conquest; and as in this conquest the most important place is the heart, He makes it also the chief subject of His glory. The Son of God is called by the prophet the arrow of divine love, because, as St. Chrysostom remarks, God having employed, without producing any great effect, many threats and darts of fire to force this stronghold, at last His dear Son, as a choice arrow, went straight to the mark, that is to say, to the heart of man, and wounded it with His love. It was with this arrow that St. Peter was struck when he exclaimed: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."† It was with

\* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† John xxi. 16.



this, too, that St. Paul was wounded when he made that noble challenge, "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?"\* And, finally, it is with this same arrow that the Church feels herself overtaken when she cries out with holy transport: "My heart is wounded with love!" O happy arrow, O victorious dart of the love of Jesus, how large an opening didst thou make in her breast in quitting His heart, and what precious wounds dost thou still make in our hearts! What is there to prevent my heart from entering into Thine, since it is pierced with so large a wound? What hinders His heart from going forth through His wounded side, and coming to dwell within my heart, and exercise there His empire? What labour, and sweat, and blood, and tears, that empire has cost Him! O blessed Saviour, how is it that Thou dost so value our hearts? What is there in them which deserves to be the object of Thy love? Jesus Christ is a great and mighty King, who delights in battles and in victories. There is nothing which resists Him but the heart. This is the only place which is able to defend itself. For this reason it is that He makes it His glory to conquer it, and it does not surprise me that, when He has made Himself master of it, He makes it His kingdom, His heaven, His paradise upon earth. This heaven costs Him far more than the heaven above. He does not, says St. Bernard, gain it by speaking the word, but He combats mightily to reduce it, and purchases it at the price of His Blood and His Life. No wonder, if having, after so many struggles, succeeded in His enterprise, He takes His repose in this place of delights, and the fruits of so glorious a conquest taste the more sweetly.

\* Romans viii. 35.

Jesus Christ is an absolute sovereign, who cannot suffer any to be a companion with Him in His throne: if He is master of the heart, He is master of all the rest, and therefore He loves the heart above all things. If I open my ear to His word, my mouth may still never sound His praise; if my tongue is employed in praising Him, my hand may not always be ready to execute His commands. But if I give Him my heart, I give Him at the same time my eyes to weep for my offences, I consecrate my mouth to Him to declare His greatness, I give to Him my hands to perform His will, and I devote to Him my soul and body, to be spent in His service.

He is a gracious King who desires to reign by gentleness, and to render to all the world the obedience which they owe more easily, He asks our heart, which each has it in his power to give. If He had made His service to consist in almsdeeds, the poor could not serve Him; if He had made it to consist in fasting, the labourer could not accomplish it; if He had placed it in prayer, the sick could not perform it; if it consisted in great austerities, the weak could not support them: but there is neither poor, or weak, or sick, who cannot give to God his heart.

Jesus Christ is a magnificent and liberal King, who delights in making His subjects happy, and heaping them with blessings. Now the heart is the place where He locks up all His treasures. If He visits His creature, it is within his heart that He takes up His abode; if He discourse with him, it is to his heart that He speaks; if He console him, it is into his heart that He pours the sweets of His consolations; if He sanctifies him, it is the heart that He illuminates with His grace; and if He glorify him, it

is the heart that He plunges into the ocean of beatitude. Within the heart of His Father, He formed the design of our salvation; he began the execution of it within the heart of His Mother; He accomplished it upon Calvary, which is the heart of the whole earth; he renews it upon the altar, which is the heart of the Church; but He makes the hearts of His saints to bring forth its fruits, for these alone are capable of bearing them.

Finally, Jesus Christ is the King of love, and in His eternal birth He is the principle of the Holy Spirit, as in His temporal birth He is the fruit and term of the Spirit. What is the Son of God by His eternal generation? He is the Word Who breathes love, and Who ravishes the heart of His Father by His beauty, and together with the Father He produces the Holy Spirit as it were a flame proceeding from their reciprocal affections. What is Jesus Christ by His temporal birth? He is a sun crowned with rays of love, that is to say, with every charm of beauty, goodness, holiness, nobility, excellence, and power, which are calculated to win the hearts of men. For this reason the royal prophet calls Him the God of hearts. "Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever." In another version He is called the loadstone which attracts our hearts by a secret virtue, the effects of which astonish us, whilst we are ignorant of the cause.

Certainly, if the loadstone attracts iron, we may ask, was not St. Paul before his conversion, when he breathed out slaughter against the Christians, a man of iron? And yet no sooner did the Son of God present Himself before him, on the road to Damascus, than he stopped short in the very height of his fury.

Jesus Christ bound him, attracted him, and lifted him up even to the third heaven. Was not Zaccheus a man who thought of nothing but heaping up treasures? and yet he no sooner felt the influence of this loadstone, than he quitted every thing, and that he might follow Jesus the more quickly he disburdened himself of his riches, giving the half of his goods to the poor, and restoring fourfold what he had unjustly acquired. Had not Mary Magdalen a carnal and sensual spirit; and yet by the first attractions of the Son of God her carnal heart was changed into spirit, and her spirit was transformed into her Saviour. She followed all His footsteps, she haunted His presence with delight, she sat continually at His feet, at Bethany, upon Calvary, at the cross, and at the tomb; and when, after His Ascension, she was deprived of His visible Presence upon earth, her love snatched her up to heaven seven times in the day, to unite her more closely to the God of her heart. Lastly, the loadstone attracts the iron on one side, and repels it on the other: so, whilst the unhappy Judas separates himself from Jesus Christ, the beloved disciple leans upon His bosom, and attaches himself so closely to the cross, that he merits by his love to have a place assigned to him near the blessed Virgin in the stead of Jesus. O my Lord, how powerful are the attractions of Thy love for winning our hearts! All that surrounds Thee attracts us towards Thee. Thy cradle was a loadstone which attracted the angels and shepherds; Thy presence, which attracts the people; Thy words, to convert sinners; Thy feet, to attract penitents; Thy eyes, to lift up the weak; Thy cross, to draw the whole world towards Thee. How many cruel and bloodthirsty men, O divine

Lamb, have been softened by the example of Thy patience! How many rich men have forsaken their earthly treasures to imitate Thy poverty and Thy generous contempt of all worldly things! How many sensualists and voluptuaries have been drawn to Thee by the odour of Thy purity, and the virginal flower of Thy Humanity! And if Thy power is so great upon sinners, what must it be on pure and innocent souls! It does not surprise me that so many holy religious have nobly despised the vanities of earth, when they saw Thy humiliation and abasement; that so many innocent virgins have trodden under foot the pleasures of sense, when they saw Thee torn with scourges and crowned with thorns; that so many martyrs have suffered the cruelty of tyrants, and endured the extremities of punishment with invincible patience, when they saw Thee expiring upon Thy cross on Calvary! But it does astonish me that, when Thy love has the same right over me, it still has not the like effect; that to my heart Thou art sterile and without heat, that Thou strikest upon this rock a hundred times without a spark of fire issuing forth. What, O my Saviour, art Thou not the God of my heart, as well as of others? and if it is hard, why dost Thou not break it; and if it is cold as the ice, why dost Thou not melt it with the fire of Thy burning charity? Such as it is, it belongs to Thee, and Thou art its Master; it is Thine, because it is Thy work; Thine, because it is Thy conquest; Thine, by right of birth; Thine, by my election. I have given it to Thee a thousand times, and I make it over to Thee this day by yielding up irrevocably my own liberty and all the power I have over myself.

This should be your resolution, O christian

soul, if you are persuaded of the truth of this discourse. This is what the Son of God expects from you and demands of you in these words: "My son, give Me thy heart." How wonderful! The God of the world and sovereign Master of the universe esteems Himself poor, and is actually reduced to want and beggary. Why is this? Because He finds no good hearts which are all His. He searches every where, and knocks without ceasing at the door of our hearts, and all refuse Him admittance. What does He seek for in His cradle amid the straw of the stable? What does He ask for with tears and lamentations? A heart that will love Him. What does He seek in Palestine, going from one province to another, and from city to city? Wherefore is all this labour and weariness? It is to win the hearts of men, and make them love Him. What does He seek upon Calvary, where he died of thirst and sorrow? And what, last of all, does He seek in the Holy Sacrament? That thirst which obliged Him to wait so long upon earth, and to work so many miracles, was only a thirst of love, arising from His excessive desire to possess our hearts. Yet He finds none to content Him. He looks upon the earth, and considers the hearts of all men; but out of this vast multitude of hearts, each of which gives itself up to the object of its affection, hardly does He find a single one which attaches itself to His bounty. O my Saviour, how poor Thou art! and how I am touched with compassion for Thy poverty! Thy pious servants are accustomed to go about, collecting alms for the relief of the poor. I will go about begging for Thee. I will search for a heart that will love Thee, and submit itself to Thy rule. But to whom shall I address my-

self? To the great men of the age, whom Thou hast lifted up to honour? They have given up their hearts to ambition. To the rich of the earth, on whom Thou hast bestowed wealth? They have given up their hearts to avarice. Shall I address myself to the sex to which Thou hast allotted the heritage of devotion? These are vain beauties who steal away from Thee the hearts of men. Shall I speak to the faithful people who profess to serve Thee? They honour Me outwardly, they hear My word, they come to the foot of My altars to do Me homage, but it is only a bodily service, and their heart is far from Me. Alas! how just are these reproaches; how the hearts of men rebel against Thy knowledge; how insensible they are to Thy benefits, inflexible to Thy prayers, and impenetrable to the arrows of Thy love!

Still I must make one effort more to touch your heart. "My son, give me thy heart." What request can be more just in the Son of God, and more advantageous to us? You must needs give your heart to some one, because it cannot exist without loving, or love without either selling itself or giving itself away. Now, if your heart is to be sold, who can purchase it better than Him who is its beatitude, its end, and its eternal reward? If it is to be given away, who merits the possession of it so much as He who is the principle of its being, and its Sovereign Lord? To whom will you give it, if you do not give it to God? To the world, which deceives it? To the flesh, which defiles it? To the devil, who would fain destroy it? Are you not ashamed to put the Son of God in comparison with the world? The Son of God asks your heart that He may save it; the world, to condemn it. The Son of God, that

He may give it life ; the world, that it may kill it. The Son of God, that He may make of it a paradise ; the world, to make it a hell. And yet will you refuse God, and give it to the world ? No, this shall never be. O Lord, our heart is Thine, and we must render it up to Thee. Thou art like the blazing sun in the heavens, enlightening the saints with the knowledge of Thy beauty. Thou art a flaming light, enkindling them with Thy love. Thou art an abiding love, filling them with the joys of beatitude. Thou art their bliss, and their centre ; their sovereign good, without whom there is no real good. And if Thou art an abiding love, art Thou not, as St. Francis says, the servant of our hearts, and also their master ; and if Thou art the Master, hast Thou not a right to enter in, and take possession ? Come, then, O Lord, and make Thyself known ; come and regain our wills, and make them serve, love, and adore Thee ; come into us, and never depart from us, but dwell with us henceforth through a blessed eternity. Amen.



MEDITATION FOR THE SATURDAY AFTER THE  
OCTAVE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

*The love we owe to the Blessed Virgin in consideration of  
this Adorable Mystery.*

"Venite, comedite panem meum, et bibite vinum quod miscui  
vobis."

"Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled  
for you."—Prov. ix. 5.

REMARK.

THE holy Fathers understand these words of the Blessed Virgin; and by the bread which she invites us to eat, they understand the Eucharist, which is a living bread formed of her substance, with which she feeds her children. We have already shown in the first discourse of this Octave, that the Blessed Virgin is our mother and our nurse, by reason of this divine nourishment which we receive in the Communion; and therefore that we may not use repetition, our meditation shall be upon the love which we owe to her on this account, and on the motives we may derive from the Holy Sacrament for giving up our hearts to her.

FIRST POINT.

Consider that the first motive which ought to make us love the Blessed Virgin is gratitude. For, if we be not ungrateful, we are obliged to love those who do us any great service. Now

we should look upon the holy Eucharist as a gift of infinite value which she makes us. "I call her," says St. Epiphanius, "the priest and the altar which gives us the bread of heaven for the remission of our sins." If then, O blessed Mother of God, the most savage animals love their benefactors, can I refuse my heart to thee, from whom I have received the greatest of all gifts, without violating the most holy of nature's laws? If I was so unhappy as not to love thee, wouldst thou not have reason to reproach me with the words of the Prophet to thy ungrateful children: "You have forgotten God, who brought you up, and you have grieved Jerusalem that nursed you?"\*

## SECOND POINT.

Consider, as the second motive, that it was principally in favour of His holy Mother, that the Son of God, who is the first and principal author of this gift, resolved to dwell here below in the Holy Sacrament, that He might console her by His presence during her sojourn upon earth; and He desired that we should be beholden to her, by requiring her consent to this gift of His Body and Blood, as if it were a gift which belonged to her. St. Thomas says, that Jesus Christ gave Himself to us four times: first, at His birth, that He might bear us company and be our guide on the voyage of eternity; secondly, on the day of the last supper, that He might be our nourishment; thirdly, at His death, that he might be our ransom; fourthly, in the glory of Heaven, to be our recompense and our reward. Now, at His Birth, He desired the consent of His Mother; at His Death He

\* Baruch iv. 8.

would have her at the foot of the Cross, to offer up with Him the sacrifice of that life which she had given Him; and in heaven He still desires that all the elect should honour her as their mother, who procured for them this crown of immortality. So that they may say to her: O Blessed Virgin, thou art the whiteness of the eternal light, chosen as the sun to enlighten the heavenly Jerusalem. Thou art the source of life, and in thy light we shall see light, that is to say, in thy Son, who has illuminated thee with His rays, and whom thou didst bring forth as the light of the world. We must also conclude for the same reason, that it is His will that she should contribute to the gift which He makes us of His own Body and Blood, to be our food; and that she invites us to this wonderful banquet with those words of love, "Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you." For, says St. Bonaventure, if she is the cupbearer who will present the chalice to us at the feast of glory, with much more reason may we say that it is she who offers to us the cup at the Eucharistic table, seeing that it is filled with the same Blood which she gave to her Son. For she never ceases still to offer up her dear Son whom she conceived, and to procure by her prayers and her cares, the union of the elect with their Redeemer. She regards as her own children all who are consecrated to Jesus Christ by grace. And how could she ever cease to be the mother of the elect, when she has engendered Him who loves them and owns them for His brethren?

## THIRD POINT.

Consider as the last motive, that in giving

your heart to the mother after having given it to the Son, you do not divide it, and you do nothing but what is well-pleasing to them both. For they have all in common, and it may be said, in some sort that Jesus and Mary are one and the same thing; that they both have one heart, not only by reason of the resemblance of their virtues and qualities, but as St. Bernardine of Sienna says, because of the unity of their substance.

The heart of Jesus belongs only to Mary, and the heart of Mary belongs only to Jesus. The heart of the Son is the treasure of the mother, because it is the source of every good thing she possesses. The heart of the mother is the treasure of the Son, because from it He derived the ransom of our deliverance. O how dear to the heart of God is this treasure! and how deeply attached to it ought our hearts to be, since it is the chief delight of God and of the angels! For it cannot be doubted that her Son loves it above all created things, and that He desires that we should so love it also, seeing that it was chiefly upon account of us that He wished to have a human mother, so that He might pay back with interest to us in the Communion what He received from her at His birth. She gave to Him a heart full of tenderness and sweetness, and He has shed upon us the favourable influences and loving streams of His bounty. She gave to Him the milk of her breasts, and He gives it back to us in the Eucharist. He who is Himself the true Bread of the Father, says St. Irenæus, gives Himself to us as a delightful food; so that being, as it were, nursed at the breast of His Humanity, and accustoming ourselves by this sort of nourishment, to eat and drink the divine Word, we might be able

to possess Him, and to preserve Him within ourselves.

I am not astonished therefore, if St. Augustine, finding himself placed in the spirit between the wounds of Christ and the breasts of the Blessed Virgin, knew not on which side to turn himself, beholding on the one side the milk of the mother, and on the other the Blood of the Son, and both being almost the same thing. But to escape from this embarrassment he had only to approach the Altar, and he would have found both the one and other in the adorable mystery of the Eucharist. For the Flesh of Jesus Christ is the flesh of Mary; and the milk which He sucked from her virgin breasts, is passed into the substance of His precious Blood which we partake in that mystery.

I bless thee, O most holy Virgin, that when by special favour thou art the Mother of God, thou dost not disdain to take care of sinners, and cherish them as thy children. It is this which gives me confidence to throw myself at thy feet, and to conjure thee to be a mother to me, and to extend to me the effects of thy compassion. Thou hast given to thy Son a heart full of tenderness to procure our salvation, give me a heart full of reverence and love to serve thee; or rather take away my heart and give me thine, so that I may henceforth love thee with thy own heart and with the heart of thy Son. For my heart is not worthy either to love thee or thy Son Jesus Christ.

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RICHARDSON AND SON, PRINTERS, DERBY.









